

CINEFANTASTIQUE

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The Handmaid's Tale

MARGARET ATWOOD'S BESTSELLER

ROBOCOP II

Summer sequel preview,
on the set in Houston

CAPTAIN AMERICA

It's movie stardom for
the '40s comic book hero

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

The comic book phenomenon comes to live-action life

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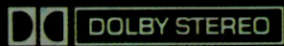
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CINEFANTASTIQUE

CONTENTS

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 4

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

MARCH, 1990

Ever since STAR WARS, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND and ALIEN made such a splash at the boxoffice in the late '70s, Hollywood has confused special effects for science fiction. Unfortunately for those of us who have had to sit through far too many witless "sci-fi" adventures, filmmakers still haven't figured out that you can do science fiction without the effects. What the genre really can't do without is ideas, precisely the commodity Hollywood's forays into the field seem to have in such short supply.

With that kind of mind-set in La-La land, it's not surprising that film producer Daniel Wilson found no backers in Hollywood for his production of Margaret Atwood's THE HANDMAID'S TALE. Sheldon Teitelbaum turned in our cover story this issue, chronicling Wilson's against-all-odds efforts in bringing Atwood's tale of future, fascist America to the screen.

Wilson found his backer in New York independent producer and distributor Cinecom, which plans to open THE HANDMAID'S TALE in select major markets early this year. With a script by British playwright Harold Pinter and a cast including Robert Duvall, Faye Dunaway, and Natasha Richardson, the film is sure to showcase the science fiction genre as the class act it can be. The only question now is will audiences weaned on spaceships and laserblasts buy it?

In the film business, quality, sadly, is no barometer of success. Take for example, Francois Truffaut's film of Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451, one of the finest science fiction films of the '70s, and one which the filmmakers of THE HANDMAID'S TALE use as a referent to their handling of the genre. Despite a literate script by Truffaut and a stellar cast including Oskar Werner and Julie Christie, the film laid an egg at the boxoffice.

We can only hope that Truffaut's film was ahead of its time. Science fiction writers, too, had their pulp phase. It could be time for audiences to learn that science fiction can be its most dazzling as a dramatic medium of ideas.

Frederick S. Clarke



Page 4



Page 8



Page 27



Page 32



Page 40

4 ROBOCOP II

Peter Weller is back punching as Robo, a report from the set of Orion Pictures' summer sequel, filming in Houston. / *Preview by Dan Persons*

6 WILLIAM FRIEDKIN'S "THE GUARDIAN"

The director of THE EXORCIST, the most potent shocker of all time, again tries his hand at horror. / *Preview by Steve Biodrowski*

8 CAPTAIN AMERICA

Comic books are hot as Marvel's superhero of two generations heads for the big screen, directed by Albert Pyun. / *Preview by Bill Florence*

10 CLIVE BARKER'S "NIGHTBREED"

The bestselling horror scribe-turned-film director provides an update on the delay in completing his new shocker. / *Preview by Bob Morrish*

13 THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

Screenwriter Larry Ferguson on giving the Tom Clancy high-tech cold-war thriller the Hollywood treatment. / *Preview by Gary Wood*

15 TRANSIT—ROCKER MEETS SHOCKER

LA BAMBA star Lou Diamond Phillips tracks a demonic killer, in a film Orion retitled THE FIRST POWER. / *Preview by Anthony Vamvakitis*

16 THE HANDMAID'S TALE

Filming Margaret Atwood's bestseller about a future, fascist America, showcases science fiction as a class act. / *Article by Sheldon Teitelbaum*

27 HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER

Art or obscenity, director John McNaughton's low-budget horror has created a sensation. / *Article by Dann Gire & Review by Thomas Doherty*

28 THE BORROWER

It's a real Hollywood horror story, Chicago director John McNaughton's tale of woe, filming his follow-up to HENRY. / *Article by Dann Gire*

32 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

You've read the comic, eaten the cereal, and watched the cartoons, now get ready for the live-action movie. / *Preview by Daniel Schweiger*

35 MISHKIN—FROM CRADLE TO "GRAVEROBBER"

Mishkin International, known for the films of horror hack Andy Milligan, has gone back to the horror drawing board. / *Article by Dan Persons*

38 NORMANICUS

Rome built in a daze, how director Paul Donovan's time travel epic got retitled NORMAN'S AWESOME ADVENTURE. / *Article by Ian Johnston*

40 JOHN VARLEY'S "MILLENNIUM"

Varley, genre luminary turned screenwriter, on his ten-year education filming science fiction, Hollywood style. / *Article by J.D. Macdonald*

44 TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL

The hottest ticket on America's midnight movie circuit, director Guy Maddin's filmic successor to ERASERHEAD. / *Article by Alan Jones*

11 COMING

54 FILM RATINGS

46 REVIEWS

62 LETTERS

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ROBOCOP

Back punching by popular demand, next

By Dan Persons

When the original ROBOCOP first hit theatres, producer Jon Davison thought his relationship with the metallic crime-fighter had come to a merciful end. "I never thought I would be involved in another ROBOCOP picture," he said. "I swore I would not do another ROBOCOP picture. It was the last thing I ever wanted to do."

This, of course, was before ROBOCOP became the surprise hit of the Summer of '87. This, of course, was before the ROBOCOP animated TV series, the ROBOCOP action figures, and the ROBOCOP lunch boxes. This, of course, was before Davison spent a none-too-satisfying stint as producer of Warren Beatty's stalled *DICK TRACY*, and before Orion Pictures commissioned a less than inspiring sequel from ROBOCOP's original authors, Ed Neumeir and Michael Miner. Now, as Davison put it, "Here I am," hard at work on ROBOCOP II.

Scheduled for a mid-summer 1990 release, the Tobor Pictures production reunites many of the actors and crew that made the original film so successful. Both Peter Weller and Nancy Allen are back, respectively recreating their roles as human-turned-cyborg Murphy and his tough-talking partner, Lewis. Daniel O'Herlihy returns as the Old Man, the distinctly amoral head of Omni Consumer Products, while Felton Perry will reappear as Johnson, the "nice" OCP Junior Vice-President. Returning on ROBOCOP II's technical side are matte artist Rocco Gioffre, RoboVision designer Peter Kuran, and ED-209 designer Craig Davies.

There are also some major



Peter Weller (r), returning in the title role, rehearses the action of adjusting his neck bolt, sans costume, with director Irvin Kershner, during filming in Houston.

new faces on the RoboTeam. Irvin Kershner (*THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN*) has taken over directing chores from Paul Verhoeven, who could not return due to scheduling conflicts with his current project, *TOTAL RECALL*. The script represents the screenwriting debut of comic book superstar Frank Miller (*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*), with additional work by Walon Green (*THE WILD BUNCH*). Chris Walas, responsible for the makeup effects on David Cronenberg's *THE FLY* and director of that film's sequel, has signed on to provide ROBOCOP II's special stunt effects.

The entire production, set in a near-future Detroit (Davison refers to it as "\$1.98 into the future") is being shot in downtown Houston and its environs—as opposed to the Dallas locations used for the first film. Interiors are being shot locally, both at Purse & Co., an empty warehouse converted for blue-screen work, and at the nearby Houston Studios.

ROBOCOP II begins with the city of Detroit in even worse shape than before. The government, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, is ripe for a hostile takeover by the monolithic Omni Consumer Products. Crime is rampant in the streets, fueled by Nuke, an ultra-addictive drug distributed by the ruthless drug dealer, Cain (*THE MONSTER SQUAD*'s Tom Noonan), and his 11 year-old enforcer, Hob (Gabriel Damon of *TEQUILA SUNRISE*). Meanwhile, the cyborg known to the world as RoboCop has been reinstated in the beleaguered, OCP-owned police force, and finds himself coping not only with the ravages of Nuke, but also with his corporate sponsor's plans to turn Old Detroit into the upper-class paradise, Delta City—plans in which there is no room for anyone whose yearly income is less than Malcolm Forbes.

Robo/Murphy has his work cut out for him: his adversaries are numerous. During the course of the film, their ranks will swell, starting with both

Cain and Hob and going on to include OCP's behavioral psychologist Dr. Faxx (*WINTER KILL*'s Belinda Bauer)—who seeks to reprogram Robo into a more obedient, OCP-sympathetic droid—and, ultimately, RoboCop 2, a nuclear-powered, armament-heavy cyborg whose clash with the renegade Murphy forms the film's climactic battle.

While the plotline clearly reflects the shift from the "Greed is good—coke is better" ethos of the Reagan '80s (as displayed in ROBOCOP) to the crack-fueled despair of the Bush '90s, Davison is quick to point out that his goal is to give the audience the same kick they got the first time around, while carrying both Robo's story and the film's technology forward.

Returning makeup designer Rob Bottin has retooled the RoboSuit, making it both easier to don (it now takes a scant hour for actor Weller to suit up) and more visually arresting, with an iridescent, "new car" look. Also returning is Phil Tippet, the man who orchestrated the stop-motion antics of that paragon of defense-contract overkill, ED-209. He's handling 95% of RoboCop 2's screen time—a task requiring the animator to simultaneously preside over seven stop-motion units in order to meet deadlines.

Shooting began last July, and was expected to wrap in January, with little time off for the hard-working filmmakers during Thanksgiving and Christmas. That still leaves barely enough time left for post-production and submission to the ratings board. "The studio would dearly love the picture to be a PG-13," said Davison. "They've spent much effort trying to convince every-

STAR TREK 6

Paramount seems poised to dump the old cast for a new sequel.

By Sue Uram

"Trekks' Lament," sung to "We Didn't Start The Fire" with apologies to Billy Joel.

Verse:

Roddenberry pushed aside, Bennett's on the inside.

No more scripts with taste, all our efforts gone to waste.

Useless to complain, things will never be the same.

Chorus:

We didn't start the series.

But we loved the premise and we loved the theories.

We didn't start the series—

*Give us back our old friends
So the movies never end.*

Verse:

No more Mr. Spock, Kirk is told "go climb a rock."

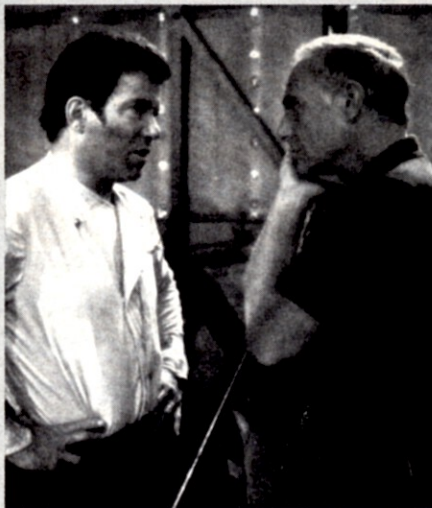
*Chekov is beamed in space,
Sulu's fallen out of grace.*

*No more Doctor's quips,
Uhura won't shake those hips.*

*No more friendly faces,
Paramount holds all the aces.*

*Trekks hopes get cast away.
What more is there left to say?*

STAR TREK 6 may best be titled "Trekks' Lament," if rumored plans for the film come to fruition. Sources inside Paramount have revealed that series producer Harve Bennett's previously vetoed script idea has now been embraced by studio executives. Following the low domestic gross (just under \$51 million) of STAR TREK 5: THE FINAL FRONTIER, Bennett submitted a new script idea to Gene Roddenberry who retains decision-making authority on the storylines for the movie series. Bennett's idea revolves around the



Out as director, William Shatner (l), in as director Harve Bennett (r), series' producer, shown closeted with Shatner while filming STAR TREK III?

beloved Trek classic characters in their university training days at Starfleet Academy. This would effectively eliminate all current major and minor cast members and their respective fees.

The \$5.5 million automatic contractual benefit, totaling \$11 million, paid to William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy to reprise their roles would come right off the top of the budget. Paramount is legally protected from honoring the actors' option to repeat their roles in a new sequel because the last film lost money, making nowhere near the \$35 million it cost to film the epic.

Gene Roddenberry is reportedly against Bennett's idea for two reasons. First, because the script itself is rumored to be poorly conceptualized. Second, because Bennett plans to do his own casting for STAR TREK 6. Roddenberry feels that he has successfully cast two STAR TREK series and is

closer to the genesis and the fruition of the show than Bennett.

Bennett declined to comment directly at Paramount, but said through assistant Kim Boyle that "recasting with younger principals is 'nonsense.'" About rumors that Bennett himself would direct the next STAR TREK installment, Bennett said last October, "I am going to direct my next film. It may or may not be STAR TREK. There has been no firm commitment [from Paramount] on a STAR TREK 6. Various possibilities are in discussion—

all too premature to talk about publicly."

Roddenberry, STAR TREK's creator, was unavailable for comment. Roddenberry's office said no script has been approved for STAR TREK 6 and referred casting questions to Bennett. STAR TREK cast regulars George Takei and Walter Koenig, however, confirmed that the Starfleet Academy scenario is one being considered at Paramount. "They are definitely headed in that direction," said Koenig. "Other options," said Takei, whose latest film BLOOD OATH, starring Bryan Brown, is due to debut at Cannes this year, "are to either recast the regulars or make no film at all." Koenig expressed sadness that the old series might end.

The release date for STAR TREK 6 could be set to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the original television series, in the Summer of 1991. □

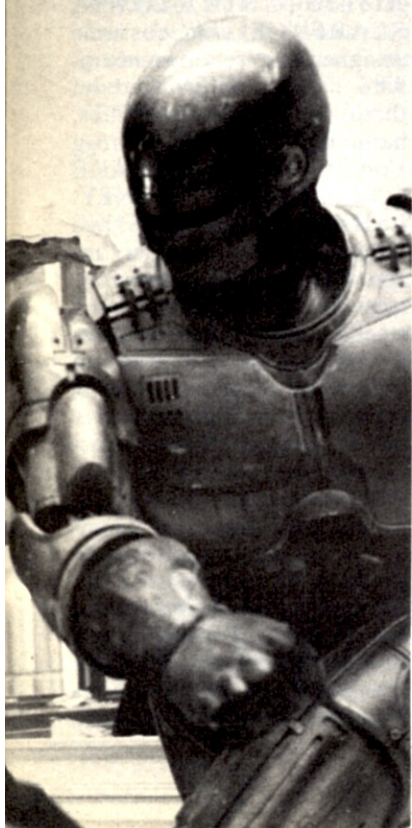
summer.

one involved that it should be a PG-13. But, alas, it won't be a PG-13. It's going to be a hard R."

Even so, Davison doesn't expect the kind of ratings hassles that greeted ROBOCOP, which courted an X rating before the exciting of some of its more graphic gore managed to mollify the MPAA. "Kershner does not revel in violence the same way Paul [Verhoeven] does," said Davison. "You'll hear Kershner saying, 'There's a little too much blood there, take that blood away,' while Paul is screaming, 'I want to see his guts shoot towards the camera!'"

Is there a price to be paid for maintaining such peace with Jack Valenti? Maybe, maybe not. Admitted Davison, while smiling to himself, "I'm hoping that somewhere, somebody will be offended." □

Weller, primed for action as Robo.



THE GUARDIAN

William Friedkin, the director of the most potent shocker of all time, returns to horror.

By Steve Biodrowski

"A realistic story about unexplainable events" is how William Friedkin described *THE GUARDIAN*, his return to the horror genre 17 years after directing the film version of William Peter Blatty's *THE EXORCIST*, a boxoffice smash which turned more than a few heads, both on and off the screen.

Friedkin has had a checkered career since then, both commercially and critically (*SORCERER* and especially *TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.* being two bright spots). Although his name has been mentioned in association with various horror projects (Anne Rice's *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* and Blatty's *LEGION*), his only subsequent brush with the genre has been the "Nightcrawlers" episode of the new *TWILIGHT ZONE*.

Friedkin was convinced to do another horror film by his longtime friend, producer Joe Wizan (*AUDREY ROSE*, *SPELLBINDER*), who was developing *THE GUARDIAN* from Dan Greenburg's 1987 novel *The Nanny*, about a young working couple forced to hire a babysitter who they gradually realize holds a terrible secret.

"I thought it touched a primal fear in everybody: who do you leave your children with?" said Wizan. "I loved the idea that it was supernatural, because if it wasn't, it becomes

"If I could find a film in this genre all the time," said Friedkin, "this is probably all I would do, because I am attracted to this kind of story. But there aren't many good ones."



Producer Joe Wizan (l) and Friedkin on the set of *THE GUARDIAN*.

almost too frightening, too close to home. At least if she's a supernatural person, it's at arm's length, and you can go with it."

Greenburg was hired to adapt his novel into a first-draft screenplay. Then Wizan brought in English screenwriter Stephen Volk (*GOTHIC*, *THE KISS*) to do a rewrite, which Wizan showed to Friedkin. "I think in this milieu Bill's one of the giants," Wizan said, explaining his choice of directors. "I don't think there's a

better movie than *THE EXORCIST*. It's pretty hard to follow that, but this one touched him in a certain way. He read the script and connected with it."

Further script revisions were made with input from Friedkin and Wizan, emphasizing the supernatural element, which takes the form of a hideous, ancient tree—a sort of demon-god which sustains itself on the lives of babies sacrificed to it by the nanny. When Volk returned to England to work on another assignment, Friedkin com-

pleted the final draft himself.

The cast, per Friedkin's custom, was chosen more for ability than name recognition, a fact which disturbed neither Wizan nor Universal. "We just went with the best actors we could," said Wizan. "Universal's comfortable with that because Bill's the star of this movie." Dwier Brown (*FIELD OF DREAMS*, *TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.*) and Carey Lowell (*LICENCE TO KILL*) portray the parents who entrust their child to Carmilla, played by Jenny Seagrove (*LOCAL HERO*).

The technical crew includes cinematographer John A. Alonzo (*CHINATOWN*, *SCARFACE*) and costume designer Denise Cronenberg, who previously worked on three of her brothers' films, including *THE FLY*. Gregg Fonseca (*A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, *HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS*) was the production designer, responsible for the three-story tree his team constructed: a steel structure 12 feet in diameter, covered in urethane foam with wood elements, housing hydraulics capable of movement—not smooth and elastic, in a fairy tale manner, but short and staccato, accompanied by the splintering of wood.

The production's 10-week shooting schedule began June 19, on locations in and around Los Angeles. Unfortunately, problems with the original special effects, all shot live as part of principal photography,



Dwier Brown stars as a father protecting his infant son from being sacrificed to an ancient tree god, a three-story-high prop made of wood and urethane foam.

necessitated an additional eight days of filming for the two tree sequences, shot in September in a wooded area near the Magic Mountain amusement park (not far from where *LEATHERFACE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III* had filmed earlier in the summer).

Friedkin never considered *THE EXORCIST* a horror movie (in fact, his decision to shoot in a straight-forward, realistic manner was, in large measure, responsible for its success). Therefore, asking him to explain why he has finally decided to make *another* horror film led to semantic difficulties. But at least Friedkin this time is willing to accept a horror label for *THE GUARDIAN*.

"If I could find a film in this genre all the time, this is probably all I would do, because I am attracted to this kind of story," he said. "There aren't that many good ones, though.

There aren't many films that have hit the level I'm after—like *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, *ALIEN*, *DIABOLIQUE*, or *PSYCHO*. I would say those are horror films but they totally transcend the genre. The stories are believable. The characters are believable. The style of performance is believable. Whereas something like *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, or *Jason*, isn't believ-

British actress Jenny Seagrove plays the mysterious nanny who serves the tree.

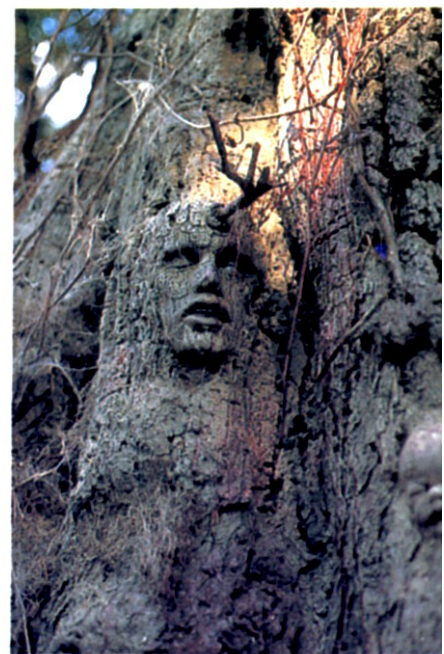


able. There's an automatic distance there between what's on the screen and the audience's perception of real people in real situations. *THE GUARDIAN* is likely to be classified [as horror], but this is a film that hopes to transcend that label.

"It's a serious film, for one thing," said Friedkin, who considers most current genre efforts to be satires. "The intensity in it is not in any way going to provoke laughter, other than the nervous laughter that occurs when people find themselves seeing a film that is too much to take. There used to be a lot of laughter in *THE EXORCIST*—which is understandable."

"Magic realism" and "unexplainable events" are the phrases Friedkin used to describe the supernatural elements he intends to insert into *THE GUARDIAN*, as he did in *THE EXORCIST*, without mitigating the sense of realism by resorting to Gothic or Expressionistic touches. "Everyone has these things in their life: strange, mysterious occurrences that you can't explain and are extremely disturbing and upsetting," said Friedkin, adding that he finds selling this kind of material to an audience no particular challenge. "The challenges are always the same—no matter what the picture—and that is to attempt to involve the audience in the story."

Although *THE EXORCIST* set a new level for shocking intensity 17 years ago, Friedkin sees no need to compete with himself by increasing the number of graphic moments for today's more jaded audiences. "These two stories are very different," he said. "What



A detail of production designer Greg Fonseca's tree, a supernatural element that gives the horror a mythic quality.

to expect is the same intensity of approach that *THE EXORCIST* had—a seriousness of approach. *THE EXORCIST* had graphic moments, but they're only moments. The body of the film is character and suspense—that is what people are hooked on."

The director added that in *THE GUARDIAN*, "there are a couple of sequences that are violent and visceral—but they're on screen very briefly. The film is not about shock effects or gruesome images," said Friedkin. "There is a classic mythology at work in the film that underlies the story, like the tales of the Brothers Grimm. Those stories contained a lot of shocking and gruesome images, but they survived for hundreds of years because they involve certain basic fears of childhood that stay with us in later life. I'm trying to work more in that area."

Although de-emphasizing the shock element of his work, Friedkin acknowledged its necessity in the genre. "Suspense without a payoff is ultimately not suspense," he said. "In Hitchcock's greatest film, there's an enormous amount of suspense, but it pays off in these brutal slashing murders. Now, what if it didn't? What if it was just the suspense? Would that film be recognized as it is today? Absolutely not. Because

continued on page 59

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Comic books are hot as Marvel's superhero of two generations heads for the big screen.

By Bill Florence

In the wake of BATMAN's huge success, and with Walt Disney's big-budget DICK TRACY project set to open next summer, 21st Century Releasing plans to open their film version of CAPTAIN AMERICA this spring, while interest in comic book heroes is at an all-time high. Based on the Marvel comic character created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby more than 40 years ago, CAPTAIN AMERICA takes viewers back to the origins of the comic book superhero and his principal enemy the Red Skull, and pits them against each other in a classic struggle of good vs. evil. The film is directed by Albert Pyun, written by Stephen Tolkin, and produced by Menahem Golan. Former Marvel comic book publisher Stan Lee serves as an executive producer. Lee's Marvel revived the '40s comic book character in the '60s—adapting the original concept.

Matt Salinger plays the dual role of Captain America/Steve Rogers. "I like the character a lot!" Salinger said. "I used to read him when I was young. Originally I got excited when they first told me they were doing this movie. But when it came time for *me* to do the movie, I became reluctant to even read the script, because I thought, 'another superhero movie, now they're making them... it's going to typecast me.' But the script was good; it



Scott Paulin as Nazi villain, the Red Skull, rocketing Captain America to oblivion.

wasn't just another superhero. Writer Stephen Tolkin did everything he could to humanize Captain America and make him accessible."

Like Bob Kane's Batman, Captain America doesn't have a lot of superpowers. Salinger referred to the character as "extrahuman" instead of superhuman. "He does have a bulletproof shield that he tosses, and it comes back to him," said

Salinger. "He has some cool stuff, but he also has human weaknesses and self-doubt and uncertainty, and I think that's important. Not only did I know that I'd have a lot of fun playing him, but also that there was enough there for me as an actor to sink my teeth into and experiment with."

The story follows the premise of the original comic book. When peaceful Italian scientist

Dr. Maria Vaselli develops a type of steroid drug at the beginning of World War II which enhances both physical and mental capabilities, the Nazi government finds a child genius, kills his parents, and injects the boy with the drug. Vaselli, horrified at the use of her creation, flees the country and offers her treatment to the American government. Rogers, a cripple, volunteers, and Captain America is born.

"As Captain America, I felt the need to play more with his feelings of self-doubt," said Salinger. "He can't help but think of himself really as still somewhat of a cripple. That gives the character a through line that will help the audience believe it is the same person throughout the film." Salinger worked with a movement coach in London to help prepare for the demands of the role.

Familiar to many movie-goers as football jock Danny Burke in REVENGE OF THE NERDS, Salinger has also had starring roles in the film POWER and the television specials BLOOD ORCHIDS and DEADLY DECEPTION, as well as work in numerous stage productions. With his 6'4" frame and all-American good looks, he seems the perfect choice to portray Captain America, but 21st Century management had a different kind of actor in mind at first.

"They were looking at body builder, model types," said



Matt Salinger as Captain America. Inset: A 1984 issue pitting Marvel's revival of the '40s superhero against his old nemesis.

Salinger. But director Albert Pyun, familiar with Salinger's New York stage work, championed the actor. "He thought this part really needed an actor," said Salinger, "so he found a big actor."

Starring opposite Salinger is 24 year-old actress Kim Gillingham, making her motion picture debut in a dual role, which can, oddly enough, be divided into three parts. Gillingham plays Captain America's girlfriend Sharon, and her own mother as both a young girl and a 67 year-old woman. Sharon's mother had been Steve Roger's girlfriend in the '40s. When the film's action shifts from the character's origins to the present, Captain America, preserved in ice at the North Pole, teams up with the daughter of his old girlfriend to again face the Red Skull.

"I see the similarities to her mother," said Salinger. "She thinks I'm crazy, though, a real nut, talking about rockets and being buried alive, and about scientists and experiments and top secret stuff. You have two

real opposites: the old-fashioned idealist and the jaded southern Californian, who has every vice you can imagine. They're opposites, but they come together because of the drama, and they really get to like one another. By the end of the movie I think a romance is beginning."

The Red Skull is played by Scott Paulin, the veteran actor of such films as *THE RIGHT STUFF*, *CAT PEOPLE*, and *TURNER AND HOOC*. Paulin said he regarded the part as the film's plum role, but came to regret the five hours spent in the makeup chair every day. "You can imagine, that gets dull after a while," said Paulin.

Conveying both old age and great strength while working with makeup and an Italian dialect proved challenging for Paulin. "The Red Skull in the comic book is extraordinarily distorted," said Paulin. "In the story, he re-enters society after having tried through the best modern methods of surgery to reassemble himself. But there

is still a kind of artificial look to him. They had to both age me and give me this look of a scarred, damaged man. It was difficult to convey that the character is very old but also—because he's been enhanced by all these drugs—terrifically powerful. I had to develop a whole new way of working, inventing a style of acting for myself."

What Paulin found most interesting about the Red Skull was the trauma of the character's lost childhood. "He spends the whole movie bitter about the loss," said Paulin. "He's willing to punish the whole world for his emptiness, and at the same time, he's searching for his own childhood. Anyone who has a dark side to himself and has a feeling that it may have come to him in childhood, knows who this character is—of course, in an extraordinarily exaggerated fashion."

If Paulin's makeup chores for the role were trying, equally unpleasant was Salinger's task of donning the production's



form-fitting, rubberized Captain America costume. Like *BATMAN*'s Batgear, the head-to-ankle suit was created by Vin Burnham Costumes and Creatures, a London-based firm that has also worked on *LABYRINTH*, *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, and *WILLOW*. The outfit's seamless stretch material fit Salinger like a rubber glove and was "terribly uncomfortable," according to the actor.

"I lost 15 pounds wearing that outfit," said Salinger, who added with a laugh, "I think they should market it as a weight loss tool." □

NIGHT BREED

The writer-turned-director on last-minute horror adjustments.

By Bob Morrish

Originally slated for a late September release, Clive Barker's NIGHTBREED is now due to open nationwide on February 9 from 20th Century-Fox. Based on Barker's novel *Cabal*, the film is the author's second effort at directing and stars fellow director David Cronenberg in a featured role.

While in Los Angeles, working on the editing, Barker explained the cause for the delay: "I had an accident on the set that required hospitalization," said Barker. "And we also decided that we wanted to do a few weeks of enhancement shooting. We decided that the movie had taken on a new direction and a new life and we wanted to expand on that. That took us into the Christmas season for a release date, and we didn't want to bring it out then because we would be playing against movies that are . . . a little too sweet, really."

Besides, New World Pictures had tried a Christmas release strategy for the Barker produced HELLRAISER II last year, and the horror counter-programming failed at the boxoffice.

While Barker's accident certainly couldn't have been foreseen, his decision to alter the film doesn't come as a major surprise, given the author's penchant for constant rewriting and dynamic development. "I'm a great one for rewriting," said Barker. "I like to be able to feel that the whole thing is in flux. I like to be able to feel that the actors have a chance to make their contributions. I like to be able to feel that I can take on board their anxieties about what they feel is weak and their preferences for what they feel is stronger."

"And then of course, there are the constraints of budget, which causes rewrites because

somebody decides you can't afford what you have in the screenplay. So I'm constantly trying to respond to what I'm feeling about the movie, and to what the people I'm working with are feeling about the movie. And that's part of the pleasure of moviemaking—to be working with other points of view."

Craig Sheffer stars in NIGHTBREED as a fugitive wanted for murder, who takes refuge in Midian, a legendary necropolis of living-dead shapechangers. Broadway actress Anne Bobby plays the girlfriend who follows him. Charles Haid (HILL STREET BLUES) plays the cop obsessed with his capture. And Cronenberg appears as the psychopathic killer committed to his destruction, a warped psychiatrist who makes the monstrosities of Midian look good.

Barker indicated that the fates of some characters changed substantially in the rewriting. "We felt there were some characters audiences were going to like quite a lot," said Barker. "But as things developed, we killed off one of those characters and then thought 'that may not be such a clever idea,' so we decided to resurrect him. I love movies, you can just resurrect people, just like that."

The initial filming was completed over

Barker (r) directs David Cronenberg in his dramatic debut as the film's villain.



Catherine Chevalier as Rachel, the spiritual mother of Midian, with Babette, her shape-changing daughter.

the course of ten weeks at Pinewood Studios in England, wrapping last July. Two and one-half weeks of additional shooting followed in September, requiring the return of Sheffer, Bobby, and Malcolm Smith, who plays Ashberry. Barker later spent two months in Los Angeles, dubbing the film and working on the score with Oingo Boingo's Danny Elfman, at which time a few days worth of additional filming with Cronenberg was undertaken. The film's budget, originally targeted at \$7 million, has grown to the neighborhood of \$10 million, but the film's backers, Morgan Creek Productions, haven't balked.

"I think they've been remarkably understanding," said Barker. "They have faith in the picture, even though it's very weird. They knew when they took on the project that my only other picture [HELLRAISER] came out of left field. And HELLRAISER did not test well. Audiences shook their heads. It was not what they had come to expect in horror movies. So I think Morgan Creek knew when they hired me they weren't going to get something that would resemble anything else."

NIGHTBREED is the first in a three picture deal between Morgan Creek, Barker and producing partner Chris Figg's Film Futures company. If all goes as planned, Barker hopes to film further adventures of the 'Breed. □

COMING

BASKET CASE II

Splatter guru Frank Henenlotter cleans up his act for a humorous R-rated sequel.

By Alan Jones

The BRAIN DAMAGE director is back—to back! Thanks to a deal with Shapiro Glickenhau Entertainment, the producers of MOONTRAP, a double dose of Frank Henenlotter will be released early this year. The flash trash director shot both FRANKENHOOKER (see below) and BASKET CASE II: HOUSE OF FREAKS for a \$5 million bargain price on a hectic 12-week schedule last year. SGE plans to open both films regionally with BASKET CASE II bowing in February and FRANKENHOOKER following four weeks later.

Henenlotter's lifelong friend and producer, Edgar Levins, explained the deal. "Frank had worked up another script but the potential backers found it too scary," said Levins. "We were puzzled by that. It was like pitching a comedy that was too funny. But there's no point going into the marketplace with a product people are afraid of, although it will be viable at some point."

One backer the dynamic independent duo offered their project to was James Glickenhau, THE EXTERMINATOR director who teamed up with Irvin Shapiro, THE EVIL DEAD salesman, to create SGE. Though Glickenhau passed on what Levins and Henenlotter were pitching, he asked if they had anything else. "Frank hadn't been working on anything else," said Levins. "But he just stood up and recited the premise for FRANKENHOOKER off the top of his head. In truth, he had been toying with the basic idea for a while. [Glickenhau] said, 'Great. Do you have anything else?' Frank replied, 'Well there's always BASKET CASE II.' He asked Frank to write both synopses up and promised he'd give us an answer in two days. He did and here we are."

Here is Pier 40 on New York's Docksides in West Greenwich Village. For BRAIN DAMAGE Levins leased a garment factory for cheap studio space. Pier 40 is far bigger, echoing the upgrading in standards between that film and

Henenlotter's latest gruesome twosome. "Because we have more resources, we can open up both movies, actually move the camera for a change, and employ SAG talent," said Levins. "The budget increase has allowed us to move away from the depressing aspects of low-cost, independent filmmaking while still retaining the true essence of Frank's warped mind."

Levins warned that Henenlotter's core audience shouldn't expect buckets of blood in either movie. "There's no point in making films which will never see light of day or contain sequences, like BRAIN DAMAGE did, which will be cut," said Levins with a sigh. "It's a waste of time, money, and celluloid. Now we've come to terms with the MPAA ratings limits. It's a case of what can we do that's not censorable, but, on the other hand, so disturbing the final payoff will be there."

BASKET CASE II: HOUSE OF FREAKS again stars Kevin Van Hententryck as Duane, who carries around his deformed, murdering brother, Belial, in a basket. The sequel picks up the story of the twins after they escape from a hospital. They retreat to a safe harbor,



The "House of Freaks" created by effects man Gabe Bartalos for Henenlotter's low-budget sequel to his directorial debut, due to open in major markets in February.

a large Victorian house on Staten Island, where a retired psychologist looks after all the monsters and creatures hounded by the public. But when a tabloid journalist exposes the discreet refuge, the brothers decide, in Henenlotter's own words, "To kick some serious ass."

When Henenlotter was shooting BRAIN DAMAGE he said he would never consider making a sequel to BASKET CASE, his 1982 directorial debut. So what made him change his mind? "There are a number of reasons," said Levins. "The major one was

that while BASKET CASE is an emotional favorite, cinematically it ain't no great shakes!"

The film's monster in a basket is the work of effects supervisor Gabe Bartalos, who created the original Belial and came up with a more sophisticated animatronic design for the new sequel, as well as a cast of 22 freaks for the house of the subtitle. "The attitude we're taking is not to offend any real freaks," said Bartalos, whose concepts included Mouse Man and Moon Man, a look-alike for the lead in McDonald's "Mac tonight" spot. □

FRANKENHOOKER: PROSTITUTING A CLASSIC

FRANKENHOOKER, part of director Frank Henenlotter's two picture deal with SGE (see above), was the first to go before the cameras. Henenlotter steered the film away from his staple blood-and-gore approach for an R-rating. "As a result, it's chock-full of twisted humor," said Edgar Levins, Henenlotter's producer. "It's our gore substitute."

Levins described the film as FRANKENSTEIN-inspired set amidst the sleaze of modern-day Manhattan. Frank Lorinz plays a budding mad scientist whose girlfriend, Patty Mullen, dies in a freak lawnmower acci-



Patty Mullen as the titular hooker.

dent. Attempting to reanimate his girl, Lorinz encounters difficulty in obtaining body parts in an age when either cremation or embalming is the rule.

Levins revealed the plot point that solves the story's body shortage as if it were a punchline. "There's a population of New York working girls who readily rent out specific parts of their body every night," said Levins. "But Lorinz can't bring himself to kill the prostitutes as he's not that sort of mad doctor. So he invents a lethal crack which causes addicted hookers to explode when they smoke. This way he's not responsible for their deaths—they could always just say no!" Alan Jones

TWIN PEAKS

Director David Lynch leads ABC into BLUE VELVET territory.

By Mark Dawidziak

Has daring director David Lynch (ERASERHEAD, THE ELEPHANT MAN, DUNE, BLUE VELVET) created a series so dazzlingly innovative that it will change the landscape of prime-time television? That's the rather startling prediction made by *Connoisseur* about ABC's TWIN PEAKS. Or has Lynch merely crafted a project that, despite its brilliance, is too rich a concoction to be swallowed by viewers accustomed to a far blander network diet? That's what NBC Entertainment President Brandon Tartikoff suggests.

Although those who have seen Lynch's TWIN PEAKS disagree about its prime-time prospects, everyone describes the grim mystery/thriller as one of the most moody and offbeat series to be ordered by a network. In the play-it-safe mood that followed last season's trash-TV backlash, it was little wonder that TWIN PEAKS failed to make the ABC Fall line-up last year. But ABC has asked for seven episodes of TWIN PEAKS, which was originally announced as NORTHWEST PASSAGE. When the Alphabet Network figures out what to do with its series starter, the Lynch drama will get a shot as a midseason replacement. As of early December, ABC still hadn't scheduled a broadcast date for the TV movie that will launch the series.

There have been whispers and raised eyebrows ever since Lynch

Kyle MacLachlan as the detective on the series, not likely to air until March.



Lynch, the auteur of weird.

started Seattle location shooting in March 1989 for the two-hour pilot episode. The very notion of Lynch—a director described as bizarre, iconoclastic, provocative, mischievous, and lurid—working on a TV series was enough to set the speculation machine turning. Could Lynch find a satisfactory outlet for his odd vision in the restrictive world of network television? Would ABC be comfortable with the director's handiwork? Rather than answer these questions, plot details have just fueled speculation. Descriptions suggest PEYTON PLACE as seen by Franz Kafka or Rod Serling.

Written by Lynch and Mark Forest, the TWIN PEAKS TV movie stars Kyle MacLachlan (of the director's DUNE and BLUE VELVET), Isabella Rossellini (BLUE VELVET) and Harry Dean Stanton. MacLachlan plays an FBI agent sent to Twin Peaks, a Northwestern city of about 50,000, to investigate the murder of 17-year-old high school homecoming queen Laura Palmer. When not commenting about the aroma of Douglas firs, this federal agent is sniffing out clues and compulsively feeding the results into his pocket tape recorder.

The mystery begins with Laura's body, wrapped in plastic, washing up on shore. Trying to

solve the case, the FBI man runs into a typically oddball assortment of Lynch characters: a handsome young sheriff named Harry S. Truman (Michael Ontkean), a slightly senile mayor, a beautiful Chinese woman who owns the local sawmill, and a deputy sheriff who breaks into tears when confronted by an emotional situation. When the TV movie is over, Laura Palmer's murder remains unsolved, which leads into the series.

Indeed, Lynch seems to be taking dead aim at such prime-time soap operas as PEYTON PLACE and FALCON CREST. And there is no shortage of eerie scenes: a deer's head discovered on a bank's conference room table, jailed juveniles howling like wolves, creepy mists rising from the forests. "Melodrama is too tame a word to describe the emotional tone," said a source close to the production. "Every aspect of the story and style has been heightened."

TWIN PEAKS probes a quiet town and "finds layer upon layer of ghastly undercurrents," *Washington Post* TV critic Tom Shales wrote in his column. "Even the overcurrents have a spooky perversity... TWIN PEAKS is one of the most intoxicating combinations of grimness and giggles ever made for television, or for anything else."

Yet as enthusiastic as Shales is about the artistic merits of Lynch's pilot, the Pulitzer Prize-winning critic has his doubts when assessing the long-term viability of a TWIN PEAKS series. He recalled the failure of MAX HEADROOM, an innovative ABC science fiction series that attracted an appreciative but extremely narrow audience.

While Lynch's films have won cult followings, ABC is after far more viewers than the directors' fans. If TWIN PEAKS is to survive, however, the network will have to be patient with what's bound to be a slow build. Since the ratings are almost certain to start low, ABC's patience will be tested early.

Lynch's task is formidable. In a prime-time atmosphere that demands quick success, he must find a mainstream audience for a project that is anything but mainstream. □

TREMORS

QUAKE TRAGEDY TAKES EDGE OFF OF MONSTER COMEDY

By Carl Brandon

After the tragic loss of life in the great San Francisco earthquake of late last year, how do you promote a comedy by the name of TREMORS? Maybe that's why little has been heard of the secretive Gale Anne Hurd production which Universal is set to open January 19.

Reportedly, when test audiences reacted negatively to earthquake footage filmed near the San Andreas Fault, executive producer Hurd ordered the sequences cut to calm Universal's nerves, and also undertook some reshooting. A switch to the film's original title, BENEATH PERFECTION, referring to its setting in Perfection, Nevada, was also considered.

The film's "tremors" are now strictly the work of four "graboids," huge tunneling beasts encountered by handy-



McEntire, Ward, and Bacon face quake-causing underground beast.

men Kevin Bacon and Fred Ward, and a survivalist played by country singer Reba McEntire.

The old-fashioned monster-film formula gets kidded in the movie's script by producers Brent Maddock and S.S. Wilson (SHORT CIRCUIT). They tagged fellow former U.S.C. Film School alumnus Ron Underwood to direct the \$11 million production. The film's pachyderm-like, tentacled monsters are puppets created by Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis, former supervisors for effects Oscar-winner Stan Winston, whose own underground creature feature, UPWORLD, is still in search of a distributor. □

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER



The Akula, a high-tech Soviet sub of the kind postulated by Clancy, a model built for the defense department by David Merriman.

Giving Tom Clancy's high-tech cold-war thriller the Hollywood treatment.

By Gary L. Wood

"It's about a boy becoming a man. Not that the character in the beginning is a boy. He's a relatively naive, idealistic individual who works in a cubicle and suddenly, because of his belief in the basic goodness of man, is thrown into an INDIANA JONES-type of adventure which takes him to the brink of World War III." That's how screenwriter Larry Ferguson described the central theme he wove into his screenplay for the film adaptation of Tom Clancy's bestselling novel *The Hunt for Red October*, a story of the U.S. submarines of today chasing the Soviet sub of tomorrow. Paramount is set to open the film nationwide March 2.

The story relates the defection of an entire Soviet submarine and her crew. The central characters are the trusting CIA analyst, Jack Ryan (Alec Baldwin of *BEE-TLEJUICE*) and Soviet captain and defector, Marko Ramius (Sean Connery of *HIGHLANDER* and *INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE*). Making matters worse for the Russians is the mere fact that the sub, the Red October of the title, is the latest in undersea technology and warfare. Hence, Ramius' ex-comrades want her back or destroyed!

Ferguson has been making his name around Hollywood for some time. He scripted the hit *BEVERLY HILLS COP II*, the highly-underrated *HIGHLANDER*, and 1988's *THE PRESIDIO*. With those credits behind him, he now receives, according to *Premiere Magazine*, "\$350,000 and way up" for a screenplay. Ferguson started his career as an actor in San Francisco before moving to writing. He makes his film acting debut in *THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER*, playing the Captain of the Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle attached to the U.S.S. Dallas.

John McTiernan, the man who directed Arnold Schwarzenegger to a victory in *PREDATOR*, and gave Bruce Willis a tour of the Fox Building that he will never forget in *DIE HARD*, is at the helm of *THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER*. Ferguson's first task was "to sit down, and, working with McTiernan, try to find out what are the essential elements of the story. What subplots can we get rid of? The writer's problem, fundamentally, was to tell this story in an hour and a half. If I told this story the way that it's written in the book, we would be 11 hours in the theatre."

The central idea of Clancy's story is that the Red October is so advanced that it cannot be detected by sonar. Besides writing about classified technology that both the U.S. or the Soviets would rather keep under wraps, Ferguson grappled with what he termed the book's dramatic paradox. Said Ferguson, "We have the idea of this super-silent submarine, and it's absolutely crucial to the story that it be found. Those seem to be mutually contradictory."

Dissatisfaction with film adaptations of popular novels is usually a standard for fans of the original book. Ferguson felt this wouldn't be the case for fans of Clancy's techno-thriller. "The screenplay is *faithful* to the book," he said. Ferguson

admitted to adding only one ingredient he felt was necessary, but missing from Clancy's novel: a sense of humor. "You're going to see an awful lot of humor in this one," he said.

Ferguson's use of humor was a purely commercial decision, and he's not afraid to admit it. "There's always one thing to remember about writing movies," he said. "It's not *art*. Writing poetry is art. Writing a novel is art. Sometimes I'm accused of crass commercialization. My response is, 'hey, I'm in a business of cheeseburgers and rock and roll.' And that's the name of the game. I don't know anybody named 'Art.' He was a guy I used to know who died in the '60s. I go home and write my poetry, and I have things that I care about, but *this* is a business."

Considering *glasnost* and the current state of relaxed diplomatic relations between Russia and America, will audiences respond to what is essentially an old-fashioned cold war thriller? Ferguson doesn't give the *glasnost* factor much weight. "I'm not the wisest person in the world, but in my opinion it's a red herring," he said. Nor does he feel the current state of world affairs will damage the film's credibility.

"There is nobody, even in *THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER*, that is a really bad Communist," said Ferguson. "It's an adventure story, and I have a feeling that audiences will sit down, no matter what the state of affairs between us and Russia on the political scene, and get some popcorn, see the lights go down, hear all the music, and discover these submarines, and they won't care!"

That may sound like a box-office prediction, but Ferguson said he wanted to make no such claim. "I would not be so foolish," he said. "I learned a couple of things on my way around. I have no predictions. I only have hope." □

Screenwriter Larry Ferguson (r), who adapted Clancy's book, makes a cameo appearance in the film in a scene with Scott Glenn, commander of the USS Dallas.



TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III

In the faceoff between Leatherface and the MPAA, the censors won.

By Dann Gire

The difference between the X-rated version of LEATHERFACE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III and the R-rated version seen in theatres is a scant two minutes. But those deleted 120 seconds represented a big headache for New Line Cinema.

"We knew going into this project that a lot of attention would be focused on our movie," said Michael DeLuca, New Line's vice-president for creative development. "But we had no idea the movie would be this problematic. We had to do a lot of altering and toning down of our film [to get an R-rating]. We completely changed the tone from realistic to stylistic."

LEATHERFACE had been scheduled for release last November 3. Because of last-minute wrangling with the Motion Picture Association of America's ratings board, New Line was forced to postpone its release to January 12.

"One of the most problematic things with the MPAA was the tone and intensity of the film," DeLuca said. "While they [MPAA officials] made specific cut suggestions after the first screening, later on they were concerned about the tone and intensity of the movie. It's hard to cut to eliminate that. We were kind of guessing, looking at the picture and trying to figure out what could be giving them problems. We tried to get rid of the overall sadistic feel of the picture. So we ended up trimming scenes by a few frames here and there."

Richard Heffner, chairman of the MPAA's ratings administration defended the handling of LEATHERFACE by his ratings board, and pointed out that the MPAA ratings system is voluntary. But according to DeLuca, the commercial realities of the film marketplace make the ratings system anything but voluntary.

"You can't advertise an unrated film," said DeLuca. "And you lose about a third of the theatres throughout the country by not having a rating. Even though a film might be horror and unrated: these people treat them the same as X-rated films. For average theatre-owners and advertising people, pornography and horror are virtually synonymous."



New Leatherface R.A. Mihailoff might as well have been in the editing room with his chainsaw.

LEATHERFACE was written by splatter punk novelist David Schow. The original draft went through several directors, most of whom passed on bringing Schow's vision to the big screen. One of them was Chicagoan John McNaughton, director of the recently discovered cult hit HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER. "I really thought the original script of LEATHERFACE was one of the best-written pieces I've read," McNaughton said. "But there was no way anybody could get what was on the printed page up there on the screen. No way. It was just too gruesome."

McNaughton and other directorial candidates passed on LEATHERFACE until the job fell to Jeff Burr (THE OFFSPRING and STEPFATHER 2). "It was tough to find somebody in sync with this kind of material," DeLuca said. "Fortunately, we found Burr. He's been good. Of course, what has happened to the movie tears a director's heart out. But he knew what he had to do."

DeLuca theorized that the MPAA's hard-line treatment of LEATHERFACE was directly influenced by parents groups and religious organizations who blasted the MPAA's "lenient" ratings on

the 007 film LICENCE TO KILL and Michael Douglas' BLACK RAIN. And DeLuca feels the MPAA ratings board is harder on independents like New Line than on major companies.

Heffner called DeLuca's charges "bullshit. And since you can't print that," he said, "I will change it to 'Foolishness!' We gave LEATHERFACE an X rating because we saw the film and not for any other reason."

Heffner said DeLuca's criticism of the ratings administration sounds like the barbs "always offered by those who don't like what they get from the ratings board. The charge that we treat independents differently from the majors is an old and misguided assertion," he said. "We even get majors that complain we treated some other major better than we treated them. They choose to see the ratings as a product of unfairness rather than an assessment of the film."

DeLuca said he understands the MPAA's ratings board answers to what the members assume are the average American parents' expectations, but "sometimes I think they just take the responsibility away from the parents and go overboard. This is really the first time I've had an experience where I've gotten into trouble with them." The MPAA had slapped New Line's NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD with an X last summer, but New Line easily obtained an R by snipping just two scenes.

"I personally get a little alarmed and kind of nervous when they begin to question the tone and intensity of a film," said DeLuca. "It seems to be a bit repressive for a society like ours. Under this system, it makes it possible for the MPAA to dictate what is art for the entire country. You kind of wonder if we'll start to lose diversity in the medium. What we'll end up with eventually is producing one kind of film for what the MPAA feels is one kind of audience. It smacks of censorship. I always get nervous about that."

Asked whether the MPAA directly dictates the "tone" or "intensity" of a movie, Heffner said, "That's the same old garbage I've heard before. I don't think it merits a response." □

TRANSYLVANIA TWIST

HORROR SPOOF
CAMEOS BY FREDDY,
JASON AND PINHEAD

By Dan Scapperotti

TRANSYLVANIA TWIST, prolific genre director Jim Wynorski's new film for Roger Corman's Concorde Pictures, is peopled with a who's-who compendium of modern horror luminaries, including Freddy, Jason, Leatherface, Pinhead, and Michael Meyers, with Angus Scrimm reprising his Tall Man role from the PHANTASM pictures.

"They are all parodies of the characters," Wynorski was quick to point out, "but everyone will recognize them. We were told by our lawyers that if we did it in the spirit of satire that we couldn't get in trouble. But we're not supposed to use them in our advertising."

The film, Wynorski's first straight comedy which he co-scripted with R. J. Robertson, is a kind of *Mad* magazine satire of horror films dat-



Dean Jones as "Nailhead," in a parody makeup by Dean Gates.

ing back to the classic Universal shockers, with Robert Vaughn as lead vampire Count Byron Orlock. The monster makeups are by Dean Gates. And Boris Karloff makes a cameo in unused footage from Corman's THE TERROR.

Wynorski shot the \$1 million production in 19 days last June. Concorde has scheduled a January release, after test bookings last year in Georgia and Florida. □

TRANSIT

LA BAMBA star Lou Diamond Phillips tracks a demonic killer.

By Anthony Vamvakitis

TRANSIT, an Interscope Production starring Lou Diamond Phillips, combines the hard-edged, straight-forward world of the cop with the subtle, intangible mysticism of the world of the supernatural. Set for a February release by Orion Pictures, the film grew out of director/screenwriter Robert Resnikoff's interest in the story of convicted murderer Gary Gilmore, who was put to death in Utah in the late '70s, and whose life was dramatized in Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*.

"[Gilmore] was a guy who believed in reincarnation," explained Resnikoff. "He said, 'I don't care if you execute me, I'll just come back as someone else.' Now what if you take somebody who is a very frightening individual, who society thinks they can get rid of by killing, but instead they've added to his strength? I thought to pit that kind of force up against a cop who is a total skeptic, who lived only by what he saw, in a gritty, rational world."

TRANSIT's title refers to the art of traveling between the land of death and the land of the living. Phillips is the skeptical Russ Logan, an L.A. homicide detective specializing in serial crimes like the film's Pentagram Murders whose victims are found with an inverted pentagram etched in the area of their abdomen. Logan captures the perpetrator, played by Jeff Kober, and brings him to justice, watching as he dies grinning in the gas chamber. But the murders continue as the spirit of the killer possesses one new body after another to carry on the slaughter.

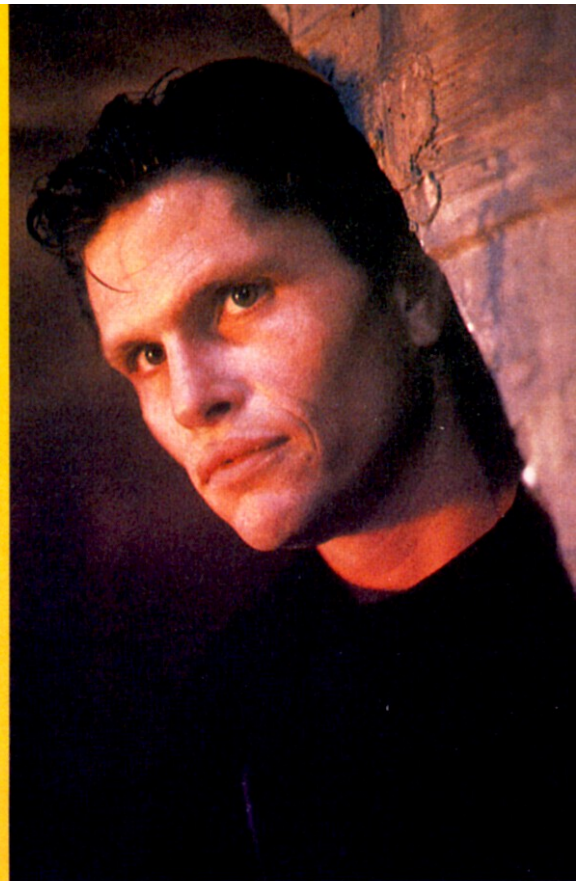
If this sounds like Wes Craven's SHOCKER, not to mention a slew of earlier films like THE HORROR SHOW, RETRIBUTION, and THE HIDDEN, the similarities aren't lost on Resnikoff. "To me what makes it different is the context that you create around it," said Resnikoff. "It's a very realistic tone I'm going for in TRAN-

SIT. I want people to walk in and say, 'Hmmm, could this really happen?'" The film is Resnikoff's feature directing debut. His 22-minute short THE JOGGER was awarded the best live-action short at the Houston International Film Festival, termed by *The Hollywood Reporter* as "a rehearsal for a thriller a la FATAL ATTRACTION."

When Phillip's skepticism leads to the death of his friend at the killer's hands, he teams up with a psychic played by Tracy Griffith, who provides clues to track down the supernatural slasher. "I start out as a very hardened, cynical L.A. homicide cop," said Phillips. "My father was shot. I lost my faith in religion. I lost my faith in anything that wasn't tangible. I believe in guns, in violence, in justice. But when things start happening that shouldn't happen, when people start floating, when they come back from the dead, then I have to start opening up to a side of myself that I wouldn't deal with before."

TRANSIT's producer David Madden, who co-produced the film with Robert Cort, referred to Resnikoff's script "wall to wall stunts." In one bit of spectacular action the killer is cornered by Logan on the roof of a 12-story building, and jumps to the street below to make his escape. The stunt was accomplished using a decelerator rig and harness connected to a razor-thin cable and pulley, filmed from a number of different angles with cameras

Writer/director Bob Resnikoff rehearses Lou Diamond Phillips as the baffled cop.



Jeff Kober as the serial killer who keeps on slashing after his execution by possessing bodies of the living.

positioned so the cable could not be seen. The rig slows down the fall only during the final 10 feet. A great deal of experimenting went into the stunt to make it appear real. If the fall is slowed down too quickly the stunt would look fake, if not quickly enough the stunt man would most likely break his legs.

The most complicated stunt in the movie appears at the climax and involves a confrontation between Logan and the killer in his lair, an old, earthquake-damaged water system. As the cop grapples with his prey, water surges forth from a fault to sweep the combatants around in a whirlpool that feeds down into a narrow tunnel. To make the water flow continuously, an incredible amount had to be used, making this the largest indoor water stunt ever created for a motion picture.

Peter Chesney of Image Engineering designed the effect using a 20'x60' steel water tank with three separate valves located 25 feet above the ground. Each valve fed its own set, including the main set, the water slide, and its terminus, dubbed the "masher" set. The tank contained 185 tons of water, released at a rate of 4,000 gallons per second. Consider that a normal swimming pool contains approximately 20,000 gallons of water.

"Many movies deal with dump tanks, which is a sort of

continued on page 60

The Handmaid's Tale

Filming Margaret Atwood's bestseller showcases science fiction as a class act.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

THE HANDMAID'S TALE, directed by Volker Schlöndorff, scripted by Harold Pinter and starring Robert Duvall, Natasha Richardson, Faye Dunaway, Aidan Quinn, and Elizabeth McGovern, was adapted from Canadian Margaret Atwood's award-winning 1985 novel, a netherworldly scenario of Calvinism run rampant in day-after-tomorrow America. The production was filmed last year, between late February and early May in Durham, North Carolina, for a neat \$13 million—significantly less money than one might imagine is necessary to bring its cautionary vision of the future to life.

Compared to this picture, however, with its sombre, nightmare glimpse of womankind under the black heels of Atwood's Swaggartians, even so outlandish a dystopia as Terry Gilliam's BRAZIL would seem to have made genuine commercial sense. And given the material and the talents brought to bear on it, THE HANDMAID'S TALE ought to make as much, if not more, aesthetic sense.

But it's going to be a hard sell for its distributor, Cinecom, which plans to open the film in select, major markets in January or February. For although Atwood's book occasionally displays its pulpish qualities and playful lapses into dark comedy, her future dystopia is literarily high brow, outwardly political and unremittingly depressing.



At the helm, German director Volker Schlöndorff.

Indeed, that producer Daniel Wilson nevertheless managed to bring this acclaimed near-future fantasy to the screen ought to get THE HANDMAID'S TALE into the book of Hollywood's least-likely-ever-to-be-made motion pictures. And, according to some recent media speculation, onto the list of nominations for next year's best film.

Wilson, who optioned Atwood's book for a hefty sum, and Cinecom plan to downplay the film's science fic-

tion roots in their release strategy. For Schlöndorff and Wilson, any reference, however tangential, to the pulp sensibilities sometimes expressed in Atwood's novel remain anathema. Wilson, for instance, insisted, rather narrowly, perhaps, that his movie must not be termed science fiction because it would not attempt the kind of flashy, techno-fetishistic future associated with most science fiction films.

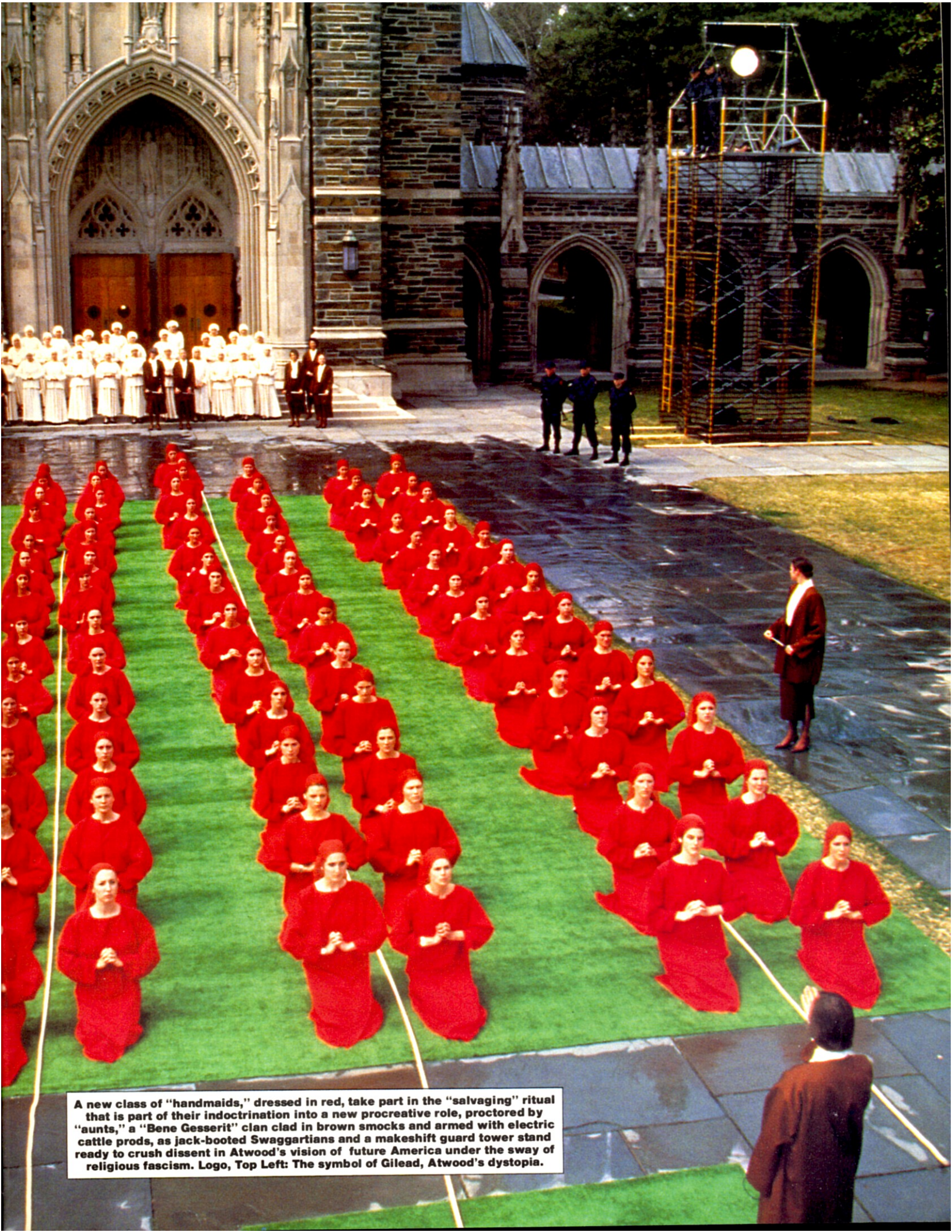
"Everything we did is set in a totally realistic world," said Wilson. "It is not fantastic, but is as straight and normal as the world we are living in, and just as recognizable. The costumes may have changed, and the rules of life, but the buildings are the same, and so is human nature."

To be sure, added Schlöndorff, "the movie is about what our society could become in the future. But this has nothing to do with streamlined cars and gadgets and has everything to do with human behavior and what people do to each other."

"It's not science fiction," said Wilson. "It's a cautionary tale about our lives."

Despite the disclaimers, Atwood's book and the film it inspired are science fiction just as surely as is George Orwell's 1984. But when you look at what passes for science fiction film these days, it's easy to see why the filmmakers want to play a labels game.

Wilson became interested in *The Handmaid's Tale* in January, 1986, when his actress wife Zoey Wilson, sug-



A new class of "handmaids," dressed in red, take part in the "salvaging" ritual that is part of their indoctrination into a new procreative role, proctored by "aunts," a "Bene Gesserit" clan clad in brown smocks and armed with electric cattle prods, as jack-booted Swaggartians and a makeshift guard tower stand ready to crush dissent in Atwood's vision of future America under the sway of religious fascism. Logo, Top Left: The symbol of Gilead, Atwood's dystopia.

The Handmaid's Tale

THE BOOK

Novelist Margaret Atwood
on filming her science fiction
vision of American fascism.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

Unlike the makers of the film, who disdain the term science fiction, Canadian author Margaret Atwood regards her novel as fairly solidly ensconced in the SF tradition. By SF, however, Atwood means *speculative fiction*, according to the usage proposed by the late Robert Heinlein, a subcategory of futuristic fiction distinguished from so-called hard SF, said Atwood, by its realism, its lack of futuristic hardware, bug-eyed monsters, time travel, and other standard genre tropes.

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* won the 1987 Arthur C. Clarke award, a genre honor, not to mention Canada's 1986

Governor General's award, and nominations for the British Booker Prize and the French Ritz-Paris Hemingway Prize.

"We've already got tomorrow's technology," said Atwood by phone. "One of the things that frightens people the most, I've found, is that everything is on credit cards, and your credit cards can be frozen at any moment. In my book, that's how they trap the females—they push a button, and bingo, no credit. So if you want to resist this tyranny, resist any change from liquid money."

In Atwood's ultragrimg fantasy, America has been ruined by the excesses of consumerism. Pollution, nuclear mishaps and genetic disasters have wreaked ec havoc, with the result that most women have become infertile. Those still able to have children are cast in the biblical role of "handmaids," as defined in the book of Genesis' story of Rachel, and are required to bear the children of the ruling elite.

Kate, Atwood's protagonist, refuses to submit to such tyranny, and attempts an escape to Canada. She is caught (and would have been turned back over to the Americans had she succeeded, Atwood postulated, choosing not to recall the time Canada generously offered young Americans sanctuary against the draft and the war in Vietnam). Kate's husband is murdered and her young daughter is taken from her.



Atwood with director Volker Schlöndorff, during her visit to the North Carolina set.

After being tested for fertility, she is sent to a training center, the Rachel and Leah Institute, where the "Aunts"—a "Bene Gesserit" clan clad in brown smocks and armed with electric cattle prods, indoctrinate Kate and her fellow handmaids in the duties and glories of their new procreative roles.

Kate is subsequently assigned to a high-ranking "Commander" named Fred (played by Robert Duvall), formerly a Madison Avenue exec, and his barren wife Serena Joy (Faye Dunaway), an erstwhile singing television evangelist. Renamed Offred—of Fred—Kate is given a small room in their home. She is forbidden to socialize with the other residents of the household, is confined to her room until summoned, and may not speak unless spoken to.

During her monthly peak of fertility, however, the three of them engage in an unusual and singularly unpleasant household ceremony. Offred lies motionless between the Commander and his wife. They are all fully dressed, as is she, and the act of copulation is cold and humiliating, stripped of any tenderness or passion. If Kate becomes pregnant she will be revered. If she fails

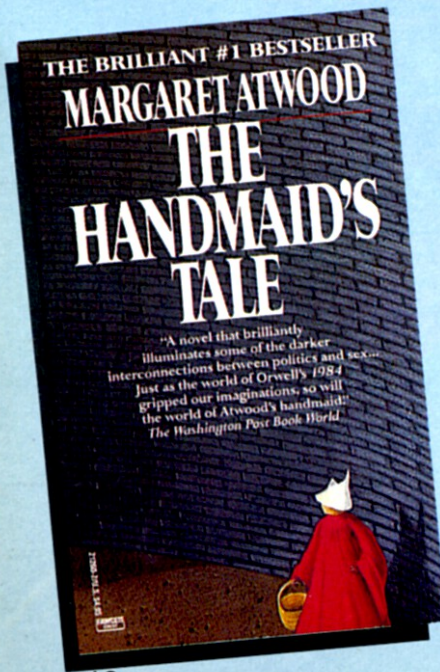
repeatedly, she will suffer the horrific fate of becoming an "Unwoman."

"People often ask me why Kate doesn't burn down the Commander's house," said Atwood, reflecting on the quaint American notion that one can survive political oppression as a Rambo action figure. "I tell them you obviously don't know what these regimes are like. All most people seem to be able to imagine is a Soviet takeover like in those movies AMERIKA and RED DAWN. Of course, no one really believes them—if the Russians can't get their dishwashers to work, what chance do they have?"

"What shocked people about *The Handmaid's Tale* was that every society has within itself an incipient form of totalitarianism which would take over if conditions favored it. And this is the form it takes."

The Handmaid's Tale is Atwood's only science fiction novel. But Atwood, like Doris Lessing, has long been a science fiction reader, and knows her way around the genre. She has never felt it necessary, as have writers like Harlan Ellison, to distance herself from the genre for fear of being tainted by its inherent commercial limita-

continued on page 58



gested he give the book a read. Wilson had toiled in the financially fecund wastelands of television as an award-winning producer, and was at work on the mini-series HEMINGWAY, starring Stacy Keach. He saw in Atwood's book the long-cherished opportunity to make an entry into feature films. *The Handmaid's Tale*, said Wilson, was "an incredible piece of literature. It dealt with how any society, no matter how seemingly stable, can be pushed over the edge. And it did so by telling a damn good story."

Wilson recalled how the laconic and cryptic British playwright Harold Pinter came immediately to mind as the proper choice for screenwriter. Although Atwood had experience as a scriptwriter, mostly for the Canadian Broadcasting Company, Wilson did not think to offer Canada's Queen WASP raconteur a crack at adapting her own novel, nor, apparently, did she ask for one.

"Atwood already had a number of offers from people out here who wanted to option the book, and there was also interest from at least one studio, though they never got far enough along to name a figure. It was not an unsubstantial amount of money she wanted. I met with her in New York while she was guest-lecturing at New York University. What I think convinced her to deal with me was my suggestion that Pinter do the screenplay."

Wilson optioned the book in February 1986 and traveled to London in March, where he got Pinter to read it, informing the playwright that he would be hiring 63 year-old British-Czech director Karel Reisz, who had already expressed interest in the project. This was crucial, said Wilson, because Pinter would only work on a screenplay if a director he approved of had been lined up. In 1980, Reisz and Pinter had worked together on *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*, and had become close friends in the process. Pinter, attracted by the prospect of working once again with Reisz, gave the book a quick reading in April, and consequently abandoned a project he had been working on to take on the adaptation.

“Atwood’s book deals with how any society, no matter how stable it seems, can be pushed over the edge. It’s a damn good story.”

— Producer Daniel Wilson —



Producer Daniel Wilson, filming on location with handmaid Natasha Richardson. Below: The star names who considered but turned down the film's grim title role.



Jodie Foster



Sigourney Weaver



Debra Winger

"I simply felt," said Wilson, "that Reisz was a craftsman who possessed sufficient intellectual weight to grapple with the material."

Nor did it hurt that both he and Reisz happened to share the same attorney.

Between optioning the material and the attendant costs of developing the script, Wilson spent \$800,000 of his own money on the nascent project. Pinter, with considerable input from Reisz, completed and delivered a first draft on September 20, 1987. The playwright had succeeded admirably, most concurred, in the unenviable task of eking out a neat, razor-sharp narrative

from Atwood's decidedly pensive, non-linear novel.

In Atwood's book, Kate spends so much of her time thinking that one is almost moved to fault the author for a lack of dramatic acumen. When one realizes, however, that her protagonist is permitted to do little with her time but think—that, to survive (always a favorite theme with Atwood), she must remain quiet and passive, living in her thoughts—the fleeting, atemporal structure of the novel begins to make sense.

"The book," noted one production observer, "was like scrambled eggs. Pinter gave the story a sequential line. We

pick Kate up at the beginning, trying to escape over the border, to her sequestering in the commander's house, her liaisons and her plans for escape. The novel covers all those things, but not in that order."

To make the book work as a film, Kate's inner life had to be externalized, the drama of her existence rendered in a well-delineated story. Noted Wilson, "What Pinter did—and he did this brilliantly, was to take these thoughts and transform them into dramatic scenes. He winnowed the book into its essence, and he didn't waste a comma doing so. The fact is that Pinter simply had the right intellect and style for the material. We solicited Atwood's comments about the script, and she loved it."

Wilson discovered, however, that it would take more than an intelligent script to get *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* on line. "I naively thought that with a best-selling author like Atwood, a screenwriter like Pinter, and a director like Reisz, any studio would want to finance the production," he recalled.

"Boy, was I wrong."

During the next two and a half years, Wilson would take the Pinter script to every studio in Hollywood, encountering a wall of ignorance, hostility, and indifference. Most of those he pitched it to told Wilson that Atwood simply wasn't a known quantity in the U.S., and that movies like 1984 and *BRAZIL*, to name two recent cinematic efforts at dystopia, had never sprouted commercial legs, and that a film for and about women as evidenced by producer Charles Fries' appallingly misbegotten *FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC*, would be lucky if it made it to video.

Two smaller New York companies, however—Cinecom and Mirimax—expressed some interest in the project. But neither, said Wilson, could come up with the kind of funding he felt was necessary—at least \$10 million. The project languished until the Spring of 1988, when superstar Sigourney Weaver got hold of a copy of the script. By this time,

Reisz, dismayed at the lack of studio interest in the project, had long since announced that he could no longer continue with the project, that other commitments were pressing. His departure was amicable. Wilson maintained that Reisz behaved honestly and honorably throughout his year-long association with the project, and was invaluable in helping to give it shape.

Weaver announced through agent Sam Cohn that she would be interested in playing the part of Kate. Casting Weaver as Kate had, in fact, never occurred to Wilson, and was somewhat hard for him to swallow. Wilson had always thought someone more vulnerable—and someone younger—would have to play the part. Wilson wondered if Weaver could tone down her trademark “Rambette” routine. But with Weaver aboard, thought Wilson, who could turn the project down?

While attending Cannes in May of 1988, Wilson learned that Cinecom, one of the two New York companies initially interested in the property, was reorganizing under a new CEO, and had recently received a healthy influx of cash. Cinecom began producing more expensive films, and Wilson learned that they were again

Unable to become pregnant by the Commander, Richardson falls for chauffeur Aidan Quinn at Joy's urging.



“It's more a surreal nightmare of female sexuality and submission than political parable. You can always build a movie on fear.”

- Director Volker Schlöndorff -



Faye Dunaway as Serena Joy, wife of the Commander and a former TV evangelist, acclimating Richardson to a handmaid's role as the couple's procreative surrogate.

considering the project. Wilson ultimately found a replacement for Reisz—and identified a number of his other principals as well—through Cohn, who suggested Schlöndorff in May 1988. For a change, things were looking up.

Then in October, a month after pre-production had begun with Cinecom's backing and less than three months before the scheduled start of shooting, Weaver announced that she had no choice but to back out of the production. The actress, who was trying to become pregnant, was ordered by her doctor to cease working. This setback almost put an impromptu end to THE HANDMAID'S TALE.

“We had all thought Sigourney was doing the film,” recalled Wilson, “and had based our schedule on her availability. Suddenly we found ourselves committed to a schedule, with personnel on the payroll, and we didn't have a lead actress.”

The irony of this turn of events—Weaver's character was being coerced by the state into becoming pregnant—was not lost on Wilson, who again despaired, as did his new-found director, of ever getting the project into the ozone.

As they would soon find, the task of coming up with a replacement for Weaver and consequently with those slated to play opposite her, would prove a tad more trying than they had expected. No one wanted to play Kate. This reticence owed, explained Schlöndorff, to the fact that “there wasn't one positive character in the story you could root for. They were all ambiguous—sometimes you hated them and sometimes you loved them.”

“All these stars Volker approached,” recalled production designer Tom Walsh, “were backing away from the material for one reason or another. He went through so many names, you have to look through an actors directory and ask who *didn't* they ask.

“Jodie Foster, for instance,

rejected the part, arguing that THE HANDMAID'S TALE was a feminist art-house film, and that she just didn't feel she was right for the part. Schlöndorff recoiled in shock and fear when he heard that—making that kind of movie was the last thing he wanted to do.”

Another actress offered the role was Debra Winger, who, said Wilson, expressed an interest but could not accommodate the production in her schedule. Ironically, Wilson later discovered that Winger had been cast in a film by the long-departed Reisz, who shot it in North Carolina at the same time THE HANDMAID'S TALE was shooting.

Walsh believes that most of the casting difficulties experienced by the production could be traced to a reluctance among many American actors and actresses to appear in less than positive roles so as not to offend their fans. “They've made so much money from whatever character they've created for themselves,” he explained, “and they don't want to be depicted as ambiguous or negative.”

It is this reluctance to take chances that may account for the fact that two of the players Schlöndorff was able to secure—Natasha Richardson (as Kate) and Victoria Tennant (suitably cast as Aunt Lydia, replete with electric cattle prod)—were British, and perhaps less interested, as Tennant has demonstrated on past occasions, in winning public adulation.

“That's what I admire about the Brits,” said Walsh. “They dive in with equal energy whether they are playing a positive or negative character. They are there to act, whereas American actors and actresses want to be loved—especially if that's what they are successful at.”

Schlöndorff compared the casting of THE HANDMAID'S TALE to a fishing expedition. Most of the actors with whom he spoke seemed to want to do strictly mainstream movies, but on the other hand, “they all wanted to do something different as well, and therefore they were often torn. First they would turn the part down, then they would come back, get

The Handmaid's Tale

DIRECTING DYSTOPIA

Volker Schlöndorff downplayed the book's premise as political prophecy, rendering it as a surreal, feminist nightmare.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

When asked where Gilead existed, according to production designer Tom Walsh, director Volker Schlöndorff replied that novelist Margaret Atwood's fascist Republic of Gilead existed on the map of human paranoia.

Schlöndorff, the Paris-educated German intellectual best known for his film adaptation of the Gunter Grass novel *The Tin Drum*, was approached by producer Daniel Wilson to replace Karel Reisz. Schlöndorff, who had been living in New York for five years, read the Harold Pinter screenplay, and then the Margaret Atwood novel. He didn't, he later announced to Wilson, much like either of them. He simply could not buy the premise—not as a piece of political prophecy, anyway. America was too fragmented a society to permit a totalitarian theocracy—people would never stand for it.

"Coming where you come from," responded Wilson, "I can't believe you can say that."

"The thing about religious zealots," argued Wilson, "is that they can tear things down far quicker than any other political movement or ideology. That's because if you don't agree, you are a heretic, and then they burn you."

Schlöndorff conceded the point, but he maintained that the scenario posited by Atwood, in which our value-relative



Schlöndorff (l), German film auteur, directs Robert Duvall as Atwood's fascist Commander.

consumer society has been replaced with a numbingly repressive regime governed by old-style American puritanism—remained hard for him to take seriously. But a month after lunching with Wilson, Schlöndorff called to ask if the position was still open.

"I had misread the book as a political parable, sort of a '60s movie," recalled Schlöndorff, who was determined not to be typecast as a European art-house director, and who wanted, very badly, to carve a niche for himself as a maker of "American" films.

"What stayed with me, though, was the relationship between the main characters," said Schlöndorff. "The whole thing was more of a surreal nightmare about female sexuality and submission. Atwood was simply dreaming up the next horrible situation she, as

a woman, could be in, and what horrible things men could do to her. The fear that such things could happen to a woman are real, and you can always build a movie on fear."

Atwood, however, takes the political implications of *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* seriously. "Since I wrote the book," she noted, "we've had the Baby M. case, the Jimmy and Tammy scandal, the Supreme Court abortion decision, and the testimony of Oliver North, which pretty much indicated that he wouldn't have minded staging a coup. Certainly Volker came to believe it more and more as events unfolded."

For Schlöndorff's part, however, he maintained that he was still unmoved. "I don't buy any of this as political prophecy," he said last September, after filming had been completed.

There was, according to

Walsh, who had worked as a production designer with Schlöndorff three years earlier on *A GATHERING OF OLD MEN*, and who was hired in the same capacity on *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*, another facet to the director's reassessment of the material.

"Volker," said Walsh, "was completely frustrated by his inability to get a number of other projects he had been working on off the ground. With Sigourney Weaver's connection to the project at the time, it seemed that here was finally a picture that actually could get done."

An intellectual who is as adept at politics and economics as he is at film, Schlöndorff was associated with the *Junger Deutscher Film* (Young German Film) movement that emerged during the mid-'60s. Schlöndorff began his career as an assistant director to Louis Malle, Alain Resnais, and Jean-Pierre Melville, and was later ranked with such luminaries as directors Ranier Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Alexander Kluge, and Jean-Marie Straub.

Schlöndorff achieved special renown for such seminal German films as *THE LOST HONOR OF KATHARINA BLUM* (based on the Heinrich Boll novel and co-directed with Schlöndorff's wife, actress/filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta), *CIRCLE OF DECEIT* (filmed

continued on page 61

intrigued, but when it came down to signing the deal, they withdrew again." This was certainly the case with Richardson, said Schlondorff, though he was able to land her the third time she came around.

"Actually," recalled Wilson, who had a different take on what transpired, "Natasha was someone we had always had in mind for the part. And she was quite enthusiastic about doing the picture." The 26 year-old daughter of Vanessa Redgrave and British director Tony Richardson (TOM JONES), the actress was far more in keeping with Wilson's idea of Kate than Weaver had ever been. Wilson had always felt the role demanded a vulnerability and youth Weaver, despite her obvious commercial appeal, so glaringly lacked. And, as he reminded Richardson when she showed up on the set last February, Wilson had worked with her grandfather, Sir Michael Redgrave, on a program about the life of Charles Dickens—his first effort in television.

"Sigourney's a fine actress," said Wilson, "and she would have done a wonderful job. But the film would have taken on a different perspective with her aboard—one I wasn't sure was right for it. I really think we were blessed with Natasha. She conveyed great emotional qualities and range, playing the kinetic and dramatic moments with equal aplomb." Schlondorff shared Wilson's spin on Richardson's recruitment. "Looking back at it, it seems almost impossible to have made the movie with Sigourney because the rest of the cast would have had to be different. She could have killed the Commander just using her jaw."

Richardson, who had followed her father to New York years earlier, had received the London Drama Critic's Award for the Most Promising Newcomer of 1986 as a result of her portrayal of Nina in Chekov's THE SEAGULL. She was best known to American audiences, however, for her starring role in Paul Schrader's PATTY HEARST. She was also able to turn her accent on

“It seems almost impossible to have made the film with Sigourney Weaver. She could have killed the Commander just using her jaw.”

— Director Volker Schlondorff —



Robert Duvall as the Commander, getting to know his handmaid a little better by breaking the no contact rule to play a forbidden board game in his inner sanctum.

and off with great facility, a matter of no small consequence for the production.

Richardson was not without qualms about the project, though Schlondorff was eventually able to set them to rest. Her boyfriend, said Schlondorff, never stopped warning her that the role would ultimately harm her career.

"Had Volker told me this was this great feminist political statement, I would have been concerned," recalled Richardson, who was interviewed in New York in August. "But that wasn't how he saw it at all. He was much more interested in human relationships, and envisioned the movie as a thriller."

"As a piece of philosophy," Schlondorff told her, "the story isn't very deep. As a thriller, however, it has potential." Schlondorff suggested that she regard the exercise as somewhat akin to Alfred Hitchcock's film, NOTORIOUS, in which Ingrid Bergman is trapped in a house run by fascists, and becomes a well-

treated slave.

Casting Richardson, however, forced Wilson to rethink the casting of his other principals. "Once we had decided we weren't going to be going the Weaver route—which would have given us major boxoffice appeal—we determined we would have to build up a first-rate ensemble that would pack the same dramatic and deal-making punch collectively."

Securing the services of Robert Duvall, as the Commander, and Faye Dunaway, as his wife Serena Joy, proved somewhat difficult, if only for scheduling reasons, but these snags were eventually unraveled by veteran production manager Wolfgang Glattes. According to Walsh, both players were also offered large sums of money, which must have helped overcome any misgivings they may have had about so unconventional a movie. Indeed, although the production was budgeted at \$13 million, only \$5 million of that, noted Schlondorff, was below the line.

Wilson, however, denied that this was entirely the case. Duvall and Dunaway were both paid well, "but our cast costs were not at all excessive. The fact is that people wanted to do this film, and some of them made sacrifices to do so." As for below-the-line costs, Wilson said these were significantly over \$5 million, especially after postproduction expenses and scoring had been factored in.

"Duvall was the only one," recalled Schlondorff, "who immediately said yes to the role. As long as his character is true to his nature, he'll do it, and he doesn't care if you root for him or not. That kind of integrity goes through his entire performance, which I think dominates the movie. Although he is the villain, he is the one you like the most."

Schlondorff faced a host of inherently difficult obstacles in his quest to create what he thought of as an American film—one which American audiences would find immediately accessible. Notably, German-born-and-raised Schlondorff was not an American, though, as he correctly pointed out, this did not prevent him from adapting that most American play, *Death of a Salesman*, in an immediately accessible fashion. The global village, he argued, has grown far too constricted for such categories to mean a great deal anymore.

There were other difficulties. Atwood also was not an American, and her outlook on many issues is discernibly Canadian, and very much her own. Moreover, Pinter had always been contemptuous of American vernacular, and his script was, according to Walsh, stripped of distinctly American dialect. By the time Schlondorff, his German director of photography, his Czech cameraman, and his two British players got hold of it, the story was already twice removed from an American sensibility, and was in imminent danger of drifting farther away from one with every impromptu decision.

Mindful of these pitfalls, Schlondorff sought out the assistance of a friend and former collaborator, Jennifer Bartlett, with whom he had worked on a number of Lon-

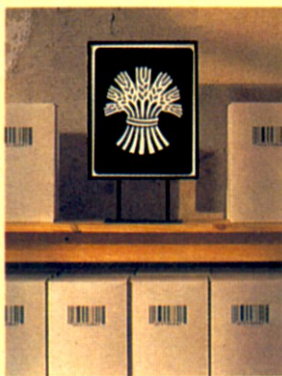
The Handmaid's Tale

DESIGN

Creating a retrofitted future look for the Republic of Gilead on a shoestring.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

From the start, director Volker Schlöndorff determined that THE HANDMAID'S TALE would look like no other dystopian film ever made. Partly, this was a function of a lack of money—the funding just wasn't there to fashion the Republic of Gilead as a Calvinist equivalent of Tim Burton's Gotham City. Mostly, though, Schlöndorff wanted to keep things simple, recog-



Flour on sale at a grocery store. A generic future of religion and Madison Avenue consumerism.



You're in good hands in Gilead—the state seal.

that movie made do with few of the conventional props of a science fiction film.

Even with so distinguished a cast, actualizing the look and feel of the film proved no easy task for Schlöndorff. Despite his ambition to create an entertaining, discernible American film, he never did get around to buying its premise entirely or becoming comfortable with the fact that the book it was based upon used more or less conventional—albeit mostly non-technological—science fiction tropes and trappings to render its nightmare vision

nizable, and slightly off-kilter.

Indeed, if the film resembles any near-future filmic nightmare at all, noted executive producer Wolfgang Glattes, it shares something of the feel of Truffaut's FAHRENHEIT 451. But for a few select elements, such as the firemen's uniforms and the monorail,

more believable.

Production designer Tom Walsh noted that Schlöndorff was nevertheless ill at ease with any kind of futuristic markers scattered within the film. "I think Volker was much more comfortable with the world of naturalism," Walsh reflected some months after ending his stint on the film. "I don't really think he [Volker] is a man of the theatre or opera, though you'd have assumed he'd have a little more imagination than he did,

and be more capable of accepting the context of fiction and developing within it.

"The fact is that the futuristic, or even fictional context made him uncomfortable, and this made the process of fabricating this world all the more difficult. He is a brilliant man who actualizes ideas quite well, but actualizing the visual sometimes makes him timid."

Although Schlöndorff maintained that visual consultant Jennifer Bartlett had essentially written the book on the movie's look, the Paris-based painter only showed

The drab, martial look of America's barren future, where those few women still found to be fertile are bussed-off to become the procreative handmaids of the state.



Black garbed fascist troops patrol Gilead, the familiar extrapolated but rendered slightly off-kilter in design.

up on the set for a brief, if extremely trying 24-hour period. "She had a lot of spunk," recalled Walsh, who found himself doing battle with her during the initial hours of her visit. "She has strong opinions on everything, most of which ended up validating ideas I had already presented to Volker. This is a collaborative medium, and I like the give and take, but none of us liked being dictated to. We got to the point where we simply had to start making all these ideas floating around real."

Walsh, who most recently worked on HBO's VIETNAM WAR STORIES, noted that the key to pulling the house-

style together, given the dearth of funds, was to keep it anchored in the familiar. "Atwood's society is 10 years off in the future," he said. "But it is a regressive society, so the things in it had to be recognizable."

Atwood, Walsh noted, drew considerably from medieval culture, upon which she superimposed the trappings of our own technological, consumer culture. Schlöndorff, for his part, insisted upon avoiding, at all costs, any references to Nazi fascism

continued on page 57

don stage projects. An American painter based in Paris, Bartlett was hired early in pre-production as a visual consultant, becoming, in effect, Schlondorff's Syd Mead. Schlondorff, recalled Walsh, used to refer to her as his "bulldozer." She was there, he said, both as a crutch and a catalyst.

It was Bartlett's vision, more than any other except Atwood's, insisted Schlondorff, which most informed the film. And it was also Bartlett who, he believes, enabled him to invest his movie with an inherently American sensibility. "Jennifer is a Californian, and she was my direct link to that American sensibility. Moreover, we had just completed two stage productions, and were extremely in sync aesthetically. For six months she worked on every detail of the production with me, and was involved in each facet, from the casting to rewriting the script to how the film should look and what kind of cinematography we should get. I was pregnant with her ideas. There's not a scene in the film that wasn't designed by her."

Executive producer Wolfgang Glattes was brought on to do *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* by Cinecom's Bob Walker, largely at the behest of agent Sam Cohn. "They thought," he said, "that I would work well together with a German director." Glattes, who has worked in film for 25 years, first in Germany and then as a Hollywood-based production manager and assistant director during the last 11, enjoyed a lengthy association with Sidney Lumet and Bob Fosse (working in such films as *THE MORNING AFTER*, *ALL THAT JAZZ*, and *STAR 80*), and is considered one of the premier line producers in the business.

One of Glattes' earliest tasks was to scout out suitable locations which would not require the building of elaborate and expensive sets. Ultimately, the Raleigh/Durham area of North Carolina was selected. North Carolina, Glattes noted, had much to recommend it, not

“When we were looping, Volker said he couldn't understand how we did that scene—it was so painful to watch—like ritualized rape.”

— Actress Natasha Richardson —



Richardson, with her husband and young son, is caught at the Canadian border in an attempt to flee Gilead to avoid conscription by the state as a procreative handmaid.

least the fact that the state offered good value, and was eager to attract productions.

Most of *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* is set in New England, the result, perhaps, of Atwood's own lengthy sojourn, in 1962, at Harvard's Radcliffe College, where she completed her graduate studies. North Carolina, said Glattes, was really the only state in the south capable of passing for New England. Duke University, where key

scenes were shot, possessed some of the ambience of a northern Ivy League college. "It had a beautiful flagstone rock look," noted Glattes. "Any further south, and the architecture starts getting too southern."

During filming, Schlondorff's relationships with his cast were reputed to have been warm and effective, though the production was filmed on sets that were closed to the press. Richardson denied, for in-

stance, contentions that Schlondorff was uncomfortable with women as his protagonists—a mark against him, given the subject matter of the film.

"That is really news to me," said Schlondorff, who noted that women have been at the core of most of his films. This was also news to Richardson, who said she had no sense of discomfort at any time during the production. Indeed, the only discomfort she could recall experiencing had to do, understandably, with the copulation ceremony between herself, Duvall, and Dunaway.

"We were all trying to be supercool about it," she recalled, "very professional and together. But there was a great sense of embarrassment. I felt sorry for Duvall, because it had to be tougher for him. He had to make the motions, while I just had to lie there. I was worried that people would laugh when they watched it, but Volker said when we were looping it that he couldn't understand how we did that scene—it was so painful to watch, like ritualized rape."

Schlondorff noted that Kate's relationship with Duvall and Dunaway was actually akin to that of a daughter who is subjected to ritualized child abuse by her parents. "This was the real archetypal relationship underlying the film," he said, "and was probably what kept me involved in the story."

There is, said Richardson, something modern, spare, and elegant about the movie she helped create. *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* is a fairy tale, and as a movie, it is considerably hipper than the book upon which it is based. There is humor here, and there is a warmth that author Margaret Atwood is not always noted for, and all this bodes well for the film.

Although *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* may not provoke the kind of controversy sparked by *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*—this is sad, because the publicity would no doubt help the movie find its audience—the film is, without doubt, an original.

"I think the audience reaction will be strong," said Richardson. That's really the best we can hope for. □

The Handmaid's Tale

COSTUMES

Supplying five hundred outfits on a budget of just \$60 each required off-the-rack solutions.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

Early on in the production of *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* costuming became a bone of contention. Director Volker Schlöndorff and his visual consultant Jennifer Bartlett insisted that clothing would, in essence, be retrofitted. Schlöndorff refused to charge costume designer Colleen Atwood with the task of creating custom-tailored outfits. This did not sit well with everybody, and particularly not with production designer Tom Walsh.

"I regarded the decision that there would be no 'built' costumes as a naive pretense," said Walsh. "It's all well and good to get everything out of a catalogue, but you can't get 500 of the same item of clothing inside of four weeks and not look like *SOYLENT GREEN*, where everybody was wearing hospital smocks."

Homosexuality, termed "gender treachery," is a capital offense requiring Gilead's hanging machine, manned by Economen, outfitted in chemical workers' suits.

Costume designer Colleen Atwood (no relation to the book's author, Margaret Atwood) took most of her clothing cues from the novel. In the movie, handmaids wear red smocks, Aunts and guards wear brown, the wives of the ruling elite wear blue, and Marthas—the servants—wear gray. The general populace, much like Orwell's 'proles,' wear whatever rags they can find.

"I relied a great deal," recalled Atwood, "on Madison Avenue's idea of what a lady or a soldier or a servant should look like. Clothing had to be utilitarian, sort of like the Red Chinese." Other sources of inspiration, especially for the men's clothing, were found in the art of the Belgian painter Delvaux, which possessed, she said, "a strange, repressive, 19th century look." The paintings of Robert Linder were referred to for colors, which



The Marthas, the servant class of Gilead, stand in their gray uniforms on the steps of the Handmaid Indoctrination Center, actually North Carolina's Duke University.

were intended to be as bold as the film's cinematography. Science fiction magazine illustrations, however, were not consulted.

Atwood's budget amounted to some \$60 per costume. Everything was bought in allotments, she said, such as a huge consignment of Chinese slippers found in Los Angeles' Chinatown. The hangman of Gilead was outfitted in a French Surgeon's uniform, the "Economen," or slaves, in chemical workers' outfits.

Costumes for extras—most of those students at Duke University, and sometimes numbering as much as 500 per scene—were prefitted by a staff which included an assistant, two seamstresses, and part-time dressers.

According to Walsh, Atwood had a number of run-ins with Bartlett during her stay on the set. "Colleen was an extremely

professional designer," said Walsh. In fact, Atwood had worked on such films as *TORCH SONG TRILOGY*, *MARRIED TO THE MOB*, *SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME*, and Sting's *BRING ON THE NIGHT*. "She certainly didn't need to be spooned, but that is precisely what Bartlett tried to do to her. It got real nasty at times."

Atwood, for her part, downplayed Walsh's assertions. "It's always tricky to have someone come on who has their own ideas about the way things should be," said Atwood of Schlöndorff's design consultant. "The truth is that some of Jennifer's ideas were quite good and some were not so great, and it was hard for me to deal with her, especially at the beginning. But I grew quite fond of her actually."

"It wasn't so hard for me as it

continued on page 61





McNaughton, seated next to his 16mm camera, directs Rooker in a scene with Tracy Arnold as Becky. Shot in Chicago for just \$200,000 in 1986 and slapped with an X-rating, the film is only now beginning to surface on the cult midnight movie circuit.

HENRY

PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER

Art or obscenity, John McNaughton's low-budget horror film has created a sensation.

By Dann Gire

It began as one of those "let's see if we can do it" projects. It became a phenomenon.

"The idea," said producer Waleed B. Ali, "was to deliver a film that looked and played as well as any other film that would come out of Hollywood. We felt that with the right resources, we could make a picture that could deliver at a number of different levels, not just be another mad-slasher horror film."

HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER is anything but. It's the *ne plus ultra* of horror, and once word leaks out into

the mainstream about the film, John McNaughton could well be on his way to joining the ranks of first-time filmmakers who have used their startling visions of horror to repulse and shock a society into dealing with secret fears and unspoken anxieties. George Romero gave us NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD in 1968. Tobe Hooper gave us TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE in 1974. Now, McNaughton has topped them both, but the question is, will audiences be able to take it?

McNaughton made his movie for a staggeringly low \$200,000,



Michael Rooker as Henry, a sociopathic mass murderer based on the real-life Henry Lee Lucas.

pocket-change by Hollywood standards. When it was given its 35mm premiere at the Telluride Film Festival last September, HENRY worked its awful magic. About 15% of the audience made a bee-line for the exits before the film had played to the half-way mark. The major mass exodus took place during and after the film's infamous home-invasion scene. But more on that in a moment.

The verdict at Telluride was a firm "undecided." Some patrons hailed the movie for its strong style and powerful content. Others decried HEN-

RY for its unflinching depiction of violence and called it "disgusting, vile," and a roster of similar adjectives. The only response HENRY didn't evoke was apathy.

When it comes to describing HENRY, "scary" isn't the right word. "Disturbing." That's closer. "Depraved," maybe. "Too real," well, that's an understatement.

If one horror film best captures the anger of its time, it must be HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER. In a decade filled with Laurie Danns, school yard attacks, and terrorist threats, HENRY subtly

exploits our fear of random victimization, the gnawing realization that no matter how cautious you are, and regardless of how nice a person you may be, by sheer chance you could be killed by a gun or knife wielded by some nut who felt like destroying a human being on a whim.

"The film works because it delves into taboos that have never been dealt with like this before," said Chuck Parello, the man credited with saving HENRY from collecting dust on an office shelf into the next century. "Child murders. Incest. They've never been depicted so matter-of-factly. There's no sus-

pense in the movie. It's just there in front of you and you have to take it for what it's worth. There's no relief, morally or otherwise. It makes people think. That's why it's devastating for some people. And another thing, I've never seen a crime movie where the police don't show up. This movie makes no judgment about these people or what they do. That's what makes it so chilling.

The movie, made four years ago in Chicago, has never had a regular theatrical release. Yet, it has become a cult-film sensation since its official

THE BORROWER

Director John McNaughton tells a real Hollywood horror story.

By Dann Gire

Nightmares are supposed to stay in front of the cameras when people make a horror film. For John McNaughton, the director of HENRY, the once-sublime experience of creating horror turned into a very bad dream when he directed his second feature film, THE BORROWER.

"The experience was certainly different from my first film," McNaughton said. "For HENRY, all the right people came to the project and it almost worked by itself. For THE BORROWER, all the wrong people came to the project. And the ones who were wrong came from Los Angeles. It was a battle every day. A horrible experience."

The plot of THE BORROWER contains faint echoes of THE HIDDEN. In outer space, a race of insect-like creatures

punish criminals by transforming them into humans and dropping them off on planet Earth, where the convicts are sentenced to dwell amongst humans. The title character is a criminal. However, the transformation process doesn't quite take.

So, after being dumped in an earthy forest preserve, the Borrower begins reverting to his non-human self and his cranium explodes. A run-in with a hunter and his son allows the creature a chance to get a head—the hunter's. This is the plot's *modus operandi*. The Borrower goes through the story, borrowing heads and taking on the characteristics of his victims.

The cast includes two performers from McNaughton's HENRY and several Los Angeles actors, the only name star being Rae Dawn Chong, who plays an investigator convinced, initially at least, that a serial killer has been responsible for the series of strange deaths. Chong, the star of QUEST FOR FIRE and COMMANDO, appeared on THE PAT SAJAK SHOW a few months ago where she badmouthed THE BORROWER for having "the worst script" she'd ever performed. It was just an insult added to the stockpiling injuries already suffered by McNaughton.

"It was a nightmare working with her," McNaughton said. "She didn't belong in a little \$2 million movie. I mean, she wants to be Sigourney Weaver. She's worked in big budget films before, so why did she do this picture? They asked her why she did the movie and she said because she needed the money. Why be so stupid as to go on TV and tell everyone you're a whore?"

Chong was only one item on a long list of things that went wrong. As of this writing, THE BORROWER is awaiting a distributor, even as it was headed to its world premiere last October as part of the Chicago International Film Festival. Lew Horowitz, one of its financial backers, claimed ownership of the movie and refused to allow it to be screened, not even to friends of the filmmakers. Originally,



A makeup effect by Kevin Yagher for McNaughton's THE BORROWER, a problem-plagued low-budget horror film made for now bankrupt Atlantic Pictures.

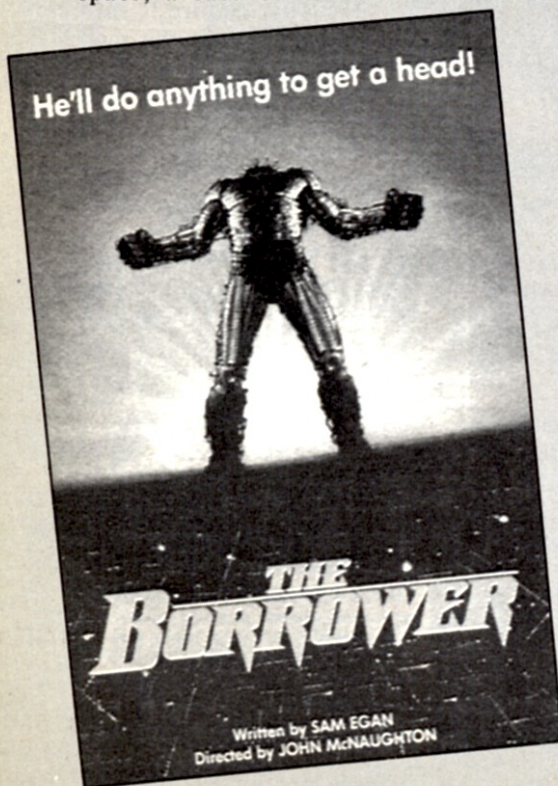
THE BORROWER had been produced with Atlantic Pictures set as the distributor.

"Then Atlantic was sold during the production," McNaughton said. "The boss went away in the middle of the night. New people came in, but they couldn't get the company into shape. So, everything collapsed. The completion bond people took over the film. It was a fiasco."

THE BORROWER was originally financed through the Kushner-Locke Company, the outfit behind TV's DIVORCE COURT and HBO's FIRST AND 10 sports-opera. Kushner-Locke hadn't had much experience in features, but it had inked a deal with Atlantic to make 10 movies with Kushner-Locke retaining ownership. The original script, by Sam Egan, proved to be too ambitious for a small company, McNaughton said. Numerous fight scenes and exploding buildings had to be scaled down to fit a \$2 million budget, but Egan was willing to make the necessary changes.

An early effects test shot—of Tom Towles decapitated by the alien's handcuffs, used as a garrote—proved disastrous when a makeup man had to be found in three days to replace a departing Kevin Yagher. "The footage was awful and I was ashamed to have been a part of it," said McNaughton. "Kushner-Locke stopped paying me because they thought Atlantic wouldn't pick up the film based on the effects footage. Kushner-Locke took the film to Atlantic last December and they didn't invite me, so they could say, 'This is

continued on page 60



public debut at the 1986 Chicago Film Festival. Currently, the only place in the world playing HENRY (in its original 16mm format) is the Music Box Theatre in Chicago, where the film plays as a semi-permanent Friday night "midnight movie" presentation.

"This is a very disturbing movie, made by some pretty disturbed people, I'd say," said Music Box co-owner Chris Carlo. "We've had great success with HENRY so far. Of course, you don't exactly run BAMBINO as a midnight movie, if you know what I mean."

One of the "disturbed" people behind HENRY is Chicagoan McNaughton, who directed the movie and co-wrote it with Chicago actor/writer Richard Fire.

"We got the idea for the movie from a segment of 20/20 on serial killer Henry Lee Lucas," said McNaughton. "His story is so horrible because it's real. He would ride around and either swerve his car to hit a hitchhiker or pull over and kill them with a gun. He traveled with a friend named Otis. In one interview we saw, Lucas was describing how Otis once tried to eat a corpse, but Lucas told him, 'Don't do that.' He had his own code, funny values tied up with this murderous urge. We tried to give [his character] some sort of personality."

"The thing that impressed us when we saw 20/20 was that he had a certain charm. In order to kill his victims, he must have gotten close to them. In many ways, he wasn't such a bad guy. He was just terribly flawed."

In the movie, the roles of Henry and Otis (with a simplified spelling) are played with deadpan sureness by Chicago actors Michael Rooker and Tom Towles. Rooker is no stranger to the genre. He played the miswired cable-repairman who tries to kill Al Pacino in SEA OF LOVE. Recently, he supported Rutger Hauer in "The Indian Poker" segment of HBO's anthology

HORROR'S OUTER LIMITS

"This is a very disturbing movie, made by some pretty disturbed people," said Chicago theatre owner Chris Carlo. "Of course, you don't exactly run BAMBINO as a midnight movie, if you know what I mean."



Henry (Michael Rooker) disposes of the bloody head of Otis (Tom Towles) his short-lived partner in crime. The film's low-budget makeup effects are the work of Jeffrey Lyle Segal.

series THE EDGE. Most mainstream audiences might remember him as the racist killer who gets his unmentionable squeezed by federal investigator Gene Hackman in MISSISSIPPI BURNING. It is Rooker's job to portray Henry as a sociopathic murderer without alienating most of his audience.

That's a tall order, especially when HENRY opens with a chilling montage of dead bodies, each killed in bizarre and different ways. One has been strangled in the living room. Another bloody body sits in the bathroom with a broken bottle jammed in its face. From this point, HENRY matter-of-factly traces the title character's pathetic life as a disturbed drifter. Whenever they get the urge—which is often—Henry and Otis prowl through Chicago, looking for somebody to kill. In one case, Otis happens to mention that he feels like killing somebody. So, off they go, hunting after dark in the eerie glow of the lights of Lower Wacker Drive, under the city's main streets. They pull over and put the hood up. They wait. But not for long.

A Good Samaritan stops to offer his assistance. He asks if they need help.

"Do you need help, Otis?" Henry chortles, knowing what's about to happen. Otis replies he can handle things himself. He brandishes a gun and shoots the hapless motorist dead. The killers pack up and head for home. They feel better now.

The infamous home-invasion scene is easily the strongest segment in a film filled with strong segments. Otis and Henry are generally molesting a couple in their posh home, *a la* A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. Their child enters the room and they kill him immediately. Then they savagely slaughter the man, and break the neck of the woman. All of their evening's "fun" has been captured on videotape, for later entertainment viewing.

HENRY, for better or worse, is powerful stuff. That power comes partially from the film's lack of the traditional vague sense of morality that is part and parcel of virtually all melodrama, be it on stage, radio, TV, or film. Even in

Truman Capote's IN COLD BLOOD the film that comes the closest to approximating the mood of HENRY, moral order triumphs when the two killers wind up in the gallows for their crimes. Audiences can breathe easier, knowing that the wicked are always punished and they can go on about their daily lives, ignoring the reality of random, purposeless death.

HENRY offers us no safety net. It simply tells its story objectively and without comment. We must bring the moral implications to the story. For some viewers, that's a scary undertaking. Some viewers need and expect a narrative escape valve for what they're watching, maybe a killer in a hockey mask or a repressed man who thinks he's his own prudish mother. Killers like that are clearly the stuff of imagination. Viewers emerge from FRIDAY THE 13TH assuring themselves that there aren't machete-wielding supernatural killers in the real world. But Henrys exist, they know. They read about Henrys every day in the morning newspaper. The movie HENRY rudely strips the fantasy away and dissolves our

Filming Tracy Arnold as Becky, stabbing the eye of brother Otis, an effects puppet manipulated by Segal.



illusion of safety. The result is a horror film that hits a raw nerve of fear and revulsion.

"Usually these movies say, 'He's the killer and we hate him and isn't he bad?' And other movies always explain why the killer is the way he is," McNaughton said. "In our movie, there isn't always an explanation to make people feel better. In my opinion, there will always be Henry Lee Lucases in the world."

The money to make HENRY came from MPI Video, an Oak Forest, Illinois video and film company operated by two brothers, Waleed B. Ali and Malik B. Ali.

"Everybody associated with the movie is dedicated to proving a point," said Waleed Ali. "That it's possible to make a movie that can get attention, get great reviews and can be gripping and disturbing without the usual bloated Hollywood budget. The idea that a film must cost between \$8 million and \$10 million to be taken seriously borders on the ridiculous."

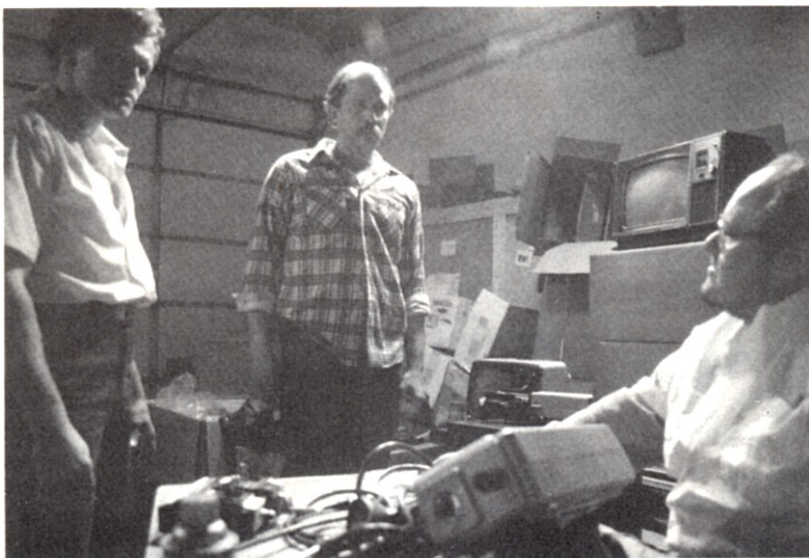
Working with an all-Chicago cast and crew, McNaughton shot most of HENRY in 1985 and finished the postproduction work in 1986. "All the right people came to the project," McNaughton said. "We had no interference from anybody. The Alis gave us the money and stayed away. They gave us that valuable creative freedom that's often talked about, but seldom realized."

Rooker auditioned for HENRY in the same clothes he wore in the film. For Otis, McNaughton cast Towles, who is featured in Stuart Gordon's great gross-out fest THE RE-ANIMATOR. McNaughton tapped Tracy Arnold of Chicago's prestigious Organic Theatre Company to play Becky, Otis' trapped sister.

From the outset, HENRY was plagued with marketing problems. Waleed Ali got his first look at the movie on a poor-quality film viewer and was unimpressed to the point where he had little confidence in the movie, McNaughton

HORROR'S OUTER LIMITS

"I was blown away," said promoter Chuck Parello. "It's one of the great American films. You feel kind of sneaky or wrong to be watching it. I think that it redefines everything a film can do for an audience."



Henry and Otis close in on their prey, Ray Atherton, as an unsuspecting fence of stolen TVs. McNaughton wrote the film with Richard Fire, artistic director of Chicago's Organic Theatre.

said. HENRY was not made into a 35mm print until last Fall for the Telluride Film Festival. When it appeared for its first public showing at the Chicago International Film Festival, it was entered in the Saturday afternoon Chicago's Filmmaker Program as a one-inch video tape.

At one point, the now-defunct Vestron Pictures was interested in distributing HENRY, but the company got into a legal war with Hemdale Pictures over the video rights to PLATOON and dropped interest.

Atlantic Releasing was in the wings, waiting to take the movie. Then McNaughton's baby fell afoul of the rating administration. The movie was given an X, a rating that may have accurately reflected the adults-only nature of its story, but made distribution impractical for a company as small as Atlantic.

In October of 1987, Atlantic finally dropped HENRY. MPI and the filmmakers were beginning to worry. As McNaughton put it, "Our movie was beginning to get whiskers." New

Line Cinema expressed interest in HENRY, but backed off because it was already too old.

"We went through some pretty rough times after that," McNaughton said.

HENRY collected dust on a shelf in MPI's offices for a long time. Until Parello entered the story. Parello had been writing for a Chicago publication called *Screen* when MPI mailed him a video cassette version of HENRY.

"I got the tape, brought it home and buried it under a pile of things," Parello admitted. "Two months later, I found it and decided to take a look at it. I was blown away! It's one of the great American films out there and I say that without a grin on my face. I think it redefines everything a film can do for an audience."

Later Parello was hired as a publicity director for MPI. His first goal was obvious to him—blow the dust off HENRY and get it into some theatres. He convinced the owners of the Music Box, which specializes in alternative fare, to play HENRY. It became an immediate cult hit and was booked

to play every Friday night at midnight. Next, Parello sent copies to New York artist Joe Coleman, a so-called "mad artist" who programs *The Late Show*, a Manhattan hot-spot that specializes in off-beat movies, which is where *Village Voice* film critic Elliot Stern viewed HENRY, calling the film "a knock-out. The best American film I've seen so far this year."

Almost immediately, independent distributors began pounding on MPI's door to make the deal McNaughton and the Ali brothers had been waiting for during the past three years. But, still, the picture was dogged by marketing problems. Last May, it was re-submitted to the MPAA, which re-affirmed its commercially disastrous X rating. A few weeks later, MPI returned the X certificate to the ratings administration. Now, the movie is officially "unrated" to avoid the public perception that it's hard-

core pornography. The X rating again squashed any distributor interest, including a bid to take on the film from the International Film Exchange, the company that released the *glasnost* hit, *LITTLE VERA*.

MPI said it now plans to self-distribute the film, which McNaughton co-produced with Lisa Dedmond and Steven A. Jones. A video release is scheduled for mid-1990. In the meantime, the film continues to unspool at Chicago's Music Box Theatre, which gave the new 35mm version of HENRY its first legitimate public showing in prime time last November.

"This film works so well because you feel kind of sneaky or wrong to be watching this," Parello said. "You're not supposed to be seeing some of the things you're seeing. But audiences do appreciate the good acting, the solid storyline, and believable situations. What happens on Lower Wacker Drive in this movie could happen anywhere. This movie brings back every fear you've ever read about in the news and then some. It brings back every fear you've ever imagined." □

HENRY

PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER

Blunt horror, too arty for the blood crowd, too bloody for the art crowd.

By Thomas Doherty

Cold and grim as a grainy newsreel, James McNaughton's portrait of a serial killer is a stark still-life portrait of pure evil. The word-of-mouth tagline—too bloody for the art crowd, and too arty for the blood crowd—hints at the unpleasant uniqueness of this creepy, thoroughly absorbing sociopath-o-pic. Against the comic book conventions of the by-the-numbers body count slice and dicers, HENRY has the unadorned, unassuming impact of a coroner's report.

The film's restraint distinguishes it from the gross-out genre, its statistical pace from the cut-to-the-chase action adventure. It is rather a deliberate, slow-building docu-drama. The opening sequence is representative in its rough exposition of Henry's busy body work through a series of slow pans over a series of individual death tableaux—female corpses in fields, drainage ditches, and bathrooms, a couple shot in a liquor store, a hitchhiker thumbing her last ride.

In Chicago, Henry connects with a pair of white trash siblings, the rotten-toothed Otis (Tom Towles) and the Harlowesque Becky (Tracy Arnold). Otis is a lowlife pervert, a slime to be sure, but with none of Henry's imagination. One night the two pick up a couple of floozies and go parking. Henry snaps the neck of his

girl, then Otis's girl, and tosses the corpses into the back alley trash. Otis is initially put out, but he quickly regains his appetite for french fries and acquires a new one. Becky meanwhile, warms to Henry over cards and TV. They trade the usual intimacies of young love in bloom—she of being raped by her father, he of the baseball bat bludgeoning—or was it stabbing?—of his prostitute mother. Though brother Otis has inherited Dad's incestuous nature, Henry forcefully dissuades him from jumping his sister. "I'm glad there's one gentleman at the table," she huffs.

In the jargon of the criminologist, Henry is an animal belonging to a select genus, "sociopath." As distinct from the merely deranged psychopath, the sociopath is a kind of mutant human who defies the

Rooker and Arnold rehearse hand-puppet effects used to film the murder of Otis, violence staged with the unadorned, unassuming impact of a coroner's report.



Henry (Michael Rooker) and Becky (Tracy Arnold), not quite young love in bloom.

smug categories of the arm-chair shrink. Where the psycho is an almost reassuring figure in his amenability to Freudian analysis ("Zo you zee," says the Viennese guy in the wool suit, "it was oedipal aggression ven Robert took the blowtorch to his shop teacher . . ."), the sociopath is beyond the pale of orthodox psychology. Joseph Wambaugh popularized the concept in his book *The Onion Field*, the 1979 film version of which introduced James Woods, the actor who made the figure his home turf. A figure of pure evil, the sociopath haunts and challenges the liberal imagination, resisting enlightened treatment as surely

as he eludes capture—hence, the serene satisfaction that even normally compassionate folk took in the recent ritual burning of mass murderer Ted Bundy.

Wambaugh believes sociopaths come in two varieties—the dumb and the smart sociopath. The dumb sociopath thinks that, like himself, no one really possesses a moral compass, that lawful behavior and conscience are but societal scams used to oppress him. The smart sociopath is rarer and deadlier. He doesn't have a conscience but knows that you do—and he knows how to use it against you.

Henry is the second kind. He kills without remorse but with intelligence. He never duplicates his *modus operandi* or commits an impulsive crime of passion. He keeps moving. In this sense, though the sociopath may not be a peculiarly American criminal, America provides a peculiarly secure killing ground and lots of easy pickings. A product of the anonymity, freedom, and mobility of modern urban life, he roams the interstate highway system like some avenging angel—only he's not avenging anything. The terrifying thing about this

continued on page 60

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

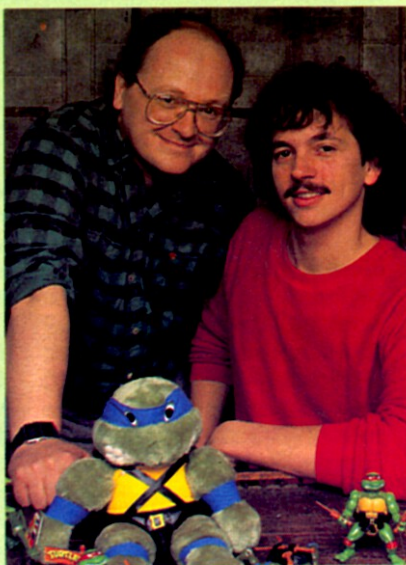
The off-the-wall comic book heroes come to live-action life.

By Daniel Schweiger

You've read the comic, eaten the cereal, and watched the cartoon. Now America's favorite reptiles have made the cinematic leap with **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**. Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Donatello, and Raphael will give Batman a run for his money when New Line Cinema releases this ambitious and secretive production on March 30th.

"We wanted to give a kick in the ass to funny animals," said Peter Laird, who created the turtles in 1984 with Kevin Eastman. The then-struggling artists had little intention of manufacturing a phenomenon when they sat down to a night of junk television. "We started playing dueling sketches, and Kevin came up with a turtle in a cloak. We got more ridiculous, and ended up with the ninja turtles."

Intended as a spoof of Bruce Lee films and Frank Miller's *Ronin* comic, Eastman and Laird went through family pockets to set up Mirage Studios and finance an initial run of 3,000 copies. These first issues now command up to \$200, popularity generated by a press release to the media. "The response we got from the mainstream was incredible, and the radio and newspapers



Peter Laird (l) and Kevin Eastman, the Massachusetts-based comic artists who came up with the turtles idea as a joke in 1984.

really turned comic fans on to the turtles."

One particular fan was the gonzo comedian Gallagher and his manager Gary Propper, who, with producer Kim Dawson, envisioned a film version with stand-up men in Godzilla-type suits. "New World approached us with that idea in 1984, and we turned it down immediately," said Laird. "Our characters weren't going to appear in some jerky exploitation movie."

However, the project regained momentum when Dawson introduced the turtles to Bobby Herbeck, a sitcom writer whose work included

DIFFERENT STROKES and **THE JEFFERSONS**. After reconceptualizing the big-screen characters, the bizarre concept was presented to Golden Harvest production chief Tom Gray. With a background of marketing such hits as **MOONRAKER** and **ROCKY**, Gray saw little potential in the funny animals, especially after **HOWARD THE DUCK** layed a \$50 million egg. "I was still laughing at their lunch proposal as I got up to leave, and then a page of the comic fell open," Gray said. "I sat back down, read through it, and became interested right away."

Though the turtles were a go, Gray discovered that Herbeck's story needed major reworking, especially since Eastman and Laird weren't happy with the initial treatment. "He might be a great sitcom writer, but he had no idea how to handle the turtles," said Laird. "He had them doing completely ridiculous things."

Gray brought in Todd Langen, a staff writer for **THE WONDER YEARS**. "He really gave the turtles that hip, irreverent sensibility that we were looking for," said Gray. "Kevin and Peter were great at giving him insights to the characters, and, though they didn't have final script approval, they



loved what Todd came up with."

Mostly based on the turtles' early issues, and incorporating such cartoon traits as their multi-colored bandanas and Raphael's love for pizza, **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES** begins as investigative reporter April O'Neal (Judith Hoag) is attacked by a gang of thieves. She's rescued by the amazing amphibians, pet store turtles who've gained human size, intelligence, and speech after being immersed in radioactive gunk. The four inhabit a sewer crash pad with the similarly mutated rat Splinter, who's named his charges after Renaissance figures and trained them in the deadly art of ninjitsu. Keeping to the shadows and city rooftops, the turtles engage in battle with the Foot, a martial arts clan who have recruited teenaged robbers for their schemes. Heading the evil ninjas is the Shredder (James Saito), who is responsible for murdering Splinter's human master.

The eccentric karate-comedy adventure couldn't be better suited for Golden Harvest, a company built on chopsocky films, which never found an American action hit after such disappointments as **HIGH**



ROAD TO CHINA and MEG-AFORCE. "We went to all the big studios for financing, but the most interest came from the overseas market, since they were attracted by the idea's strangeness," said Gray. "But I wanted something better than a \$2 million production in Hong Kong, and Jim Henson's interest helped get the budget up to \$12 million. The movie doesn't have any name actors because the turtles are the stars."

Henson was given 18 weeks to create the film's animatronic characters, which weren't ready until the day shooting began last July 7th. Guarded with a secrecy usually reserved for Spielberg creations, the 5'4"

high turtles, according to Gray, will be even more astonishing and advanced than anything Henson designed for THE DARK CRYSTAL and LABYRINTH. Eight were built at his London-based Creature Shop, including four completely articulated "acting" turtles and four "stunt" turtles for the numerous action scenes. John Stephenson and William Plant were in charge of their construction, making full body casts of foam latex, with fiberglass heads big enough for a single operator to control each turtle. They ended up developing six new servomotor techniques in the process, allowing the turtles to lip synch with wild facial contortions.

Leonard flies into battle against a member of the Foot, an evil martial arts clan. Inset: A recent issue of the comics phenomenon, written and drawn by Rick Veitch and published by Eastman and Laird's Mirage Studios company.

To find a director who could retain the comic's flashy style, Gray turned on his MTV. "I had a list of filmmakers, and I wanted Steve Barron [ELECTRIC DREAMS] after seeing his videos for ZZ Top and Michael Jackson," said Gray. "He's got a terrific imagination." Barron was also uniquely suited for the turtles after giving Henson's creations life in the STORYTELLER episodes "Hans, My Hedgehog," "Sap-sorrow," and "Fearnot."

Laird was equally impressed with Barron when he visited the sets in North Carolina. "Steve's done a terrific job of adapting the comic," he said. "I'm amazed that there are practically no liberties taken with it. There's a flow to the book's action and lighting, and he's done a particularly good job at capturing those aspects." Eastman has a cameo in the film as a garbage man, star exposure which Laird bowed-out of due to jet lag.

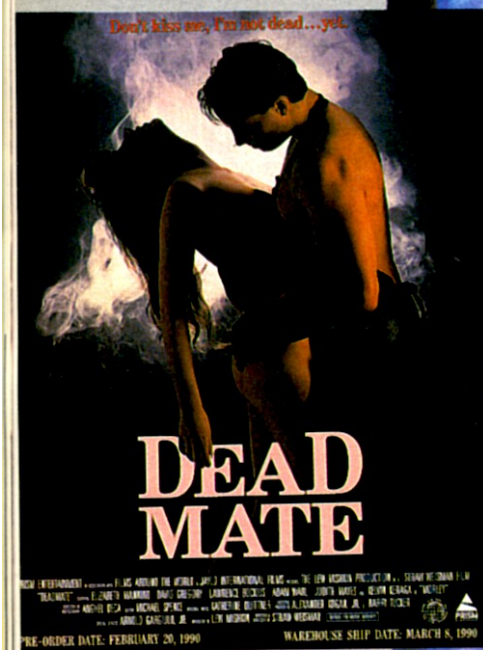
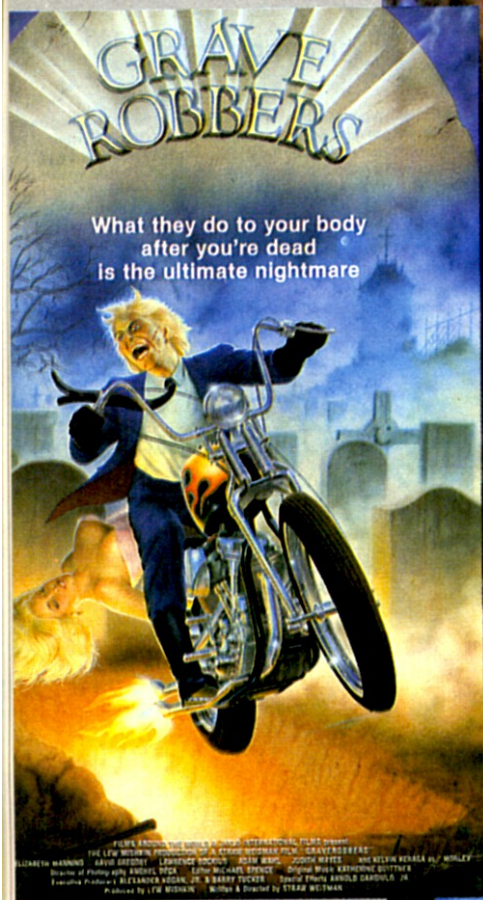
The faithfulness that TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES displays for its source material will hopefully prevent

the fan disgruntlement that's surrounded other comic-to-film translations. "Eastman and Laird have a cult unto themselves, and we didn't want to tinker with that," said Gray. "Unlike BATMAN, we didn't make many changes because what matters most to us is what the comic fans think. But we've also skewed the turtles for an adult audience. It's going to be a very hip film. We've even got the turtles quoting MOONLIGHTING!"

The masterfully exploitative New Line Cinema plans to give TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES a splashy, national break, with zany tie-ins, including toy give-aways from Burger King. "Only New Line saw the characters' potential, and wanted to take the risk with us," said Gray. "The bigger studios wouldn't because the turtles were so much from left field that they didn't fit into their formula. New Line's work with Freddy and Leatherface shows they know how to market atypical characters, and we definitely want as many turtle sequels as we can get." □

The turtles, men-in-suit creations of Jim Henson's creature shop, emerge from under the streets of New York to come to the aid of news investigator Judith Hoag.





Kelvin Keraga as Morley, in makeup as a disintegrating corpse by Arnold Gargiulo II, the horror piece de resistance of GRAVEROBBER, the latest effort of independent producer Mishkin International. Prism Video plans to release the unrated film March 8 under the title DEAD MATE, selling the sex and playing down the horror angle of Mishkin's campaign (above). Relax, the film wasn't directed by Mishkin regular Andy Milligan. Mishkin turned instead to the firm's former film booker, Straw Weisman.

MISHKIN

FROM CRADLE TO 'GRAVEROBBER'S'

A new shocker emerges from the producer of some of the worst horror films ever made.

By Dan Persons

Lew Mishkin, producer, president, and sole employee of Mishkin International, makes no bones about it: "I went into the business after practicing law for a few years because, at the time, the business had a certain intrigue for me, a certain creativity and freedom—although I never was that enamored of film as an art form. It was always business, but it offered certain things, amongst which I didn't have the indignity of working in a law firm where my secretary was getting paid more than I was."

Not exactly the words to set the heart of your average film lover ablaze. Then again, Lew Mishkin doesn't quite fit the mold of your average film executive. Plain-spoken, pragmatic, at times brutally honest about the people who have worked for his company, Mishkin is a veteran who feels his time in the trenches has freed him from the need to indulge in Allan Carr-like fantasies of a film industry that never was.

Not that Mishkin International ever pretended to be in the league with the likes of Paramount and Universal. The operation makes its home in a single, four-wall office that Mishkin sublets from a film distributor in Times Square. Decorations are sparse, staff is non-existent. Dial the number on the Mishkin International letterhead and Lew himself will pick up the phone. When he's out of the office, an answering machine covers for him.

Founded in 1949 by Lew's father, William, Mishkin International was one



Lew Mishkin in his Times Square office at Mishkin, Int'l, infamous for its string of execrable low-budget shockers directed by Andy Milligan in the '60s and '70s.

of the first companies to lay claim to the title of independent distributor. In those early years, the company catered mostly to what was called the "nudie circuit," theatres showing films in which the story, more often than not, served merely as an excuse for the baring of female flesh. "Sexless sex films," is how Lew Mishkin typed them, movies that served up tits and tails in more-often-than-not meagre portions, and stopped far short of actual carnal knowledge.

That particular market was changing as Lew Mishkin gained more control of the company in 1969. Mainstream movies, thanks to the ratings system, were reaching a new level of explicitness (these were the years when an X rating on such films as MIDNIGHT COWBOY and A CLOCKWORK ORANGE didn't automatically mean a lock-out from legitimate

theatre chains). In a few years DEEP THROAT would extend the limits of "adult" filmmaking. Lew Mishkin had a decision to make.

"When the market opened up," said Mishkin, "we got cowardly. Not for any moral or ethical reasons, because, quite frankly, I find nothing objectionable about pornography. It's basically I didn't want somebody knocking at my door and having to litigate the legitimacy of my business. So we steered away from it. It was a practical decision, rather than a moral decision."

In the early '60s, William Mishkin had begun a professional association with director Andy Milligan. Lew now carried that association forward.

From the end of the '60s, on into the '70s, Milligan directed cheapie horror films for Mishkin International, films such as TORTURE DUNGEON, THE BLOODTHIRSTY BUTCHERS (1970), and the evocatively titled THE RATS ARE COMING! THE WEREWOLVES ARE HERE! (1972). Shot mostly in England (with occasional trips to glamorous Staten Island), using genuine, poverty-row budgets, these were films that invariably had audiences hungering for the deft hand and subtle insight of an Ed Wood, Jr., or a William Beaudine.

So bad are Milligan's films ("If you're an Andy Milligan fan," says the *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*, "there's no hope for you."), not even Mishkin himself will leap to the director's defense. The situation isn't helped by the fact that the relationship between Mishkin and Staten Island's

own Kubrick was never very cordial. Said Mishkin, "My father got along with him much better than I did, let's put it that way." While acknowledging that, in general, the bond between producer and director is oft-times strained, Mishkin holds that the discomfort he and Milligan felt for each other extended far beyond the limits of their professional roles: "Andy and I see each other, and each of our blood pressures rise. We basically used each other. He used me because we came up with the money for him to make films where he wasn't cheated. We used him because he was able to make films cheaper than anyone else that were, at a certain point in time, marketable. We each benefited, we each suffered."

Outside of Milligan's work, Mishkin had also produced a minor Elvis Presley satire called *PELVIS*, but also known as *TOGA PARTY*, and *ALL DRESSED IN RUBBER WITH NOWHERE TO GO*, the actioner *FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE*, which featured the screen debut of William Sanderson ("Larry" of *NEWHART*), and the comedy *HOT TIMES* (helmed by Mishkin's junior high classmate and director of *THE BIG EASY*, Jim McBride). In later years, the company backed away from production, concentrating instead on the acquisition and distribution of Chinese martial arts films. When that market went soft, the cameras rolled again.

A two-picture deal with distributor Films Around the World led to Mishkin's reunion with Andy Milligan for the 1988 production, *MONSTROSITY*. Mishkin had little to say about this film (except that Films Around the World is happy with it). In fact, it seems he'd rather *MONSTROSITY* was forgotten entirely, and attention was paid to the second, and most recent, product to emerge from the deal. Originally, this was also to be a Milligan-directed story. Instead, Mishkin convinced the folks at Films Around the World to go with an untried commodity: Mishkin International's former booker, Straw Weisman, directing from his own script.

The result was *GRAVEROBBERERS*, a black-comedy about a young, pretty, and somewhat stupid newlywed named Nora (Elizabeth Mannino) who discovers that her mortician husband, Henry (David Gregory), and his altogether peculiar chauffeur, Morley (Kelvin Keraga), are leaders of a clutch of high-tech necrophiliacs, perverts who engage in midnight frolics with the electrically revived corpses of high school cheerleaders. Shot in the

"I was never enamored of film as an art form," said Lew Mishkin. "It was always a business. We used Andy Milligan because he could make films cheaper than anyone."



Straw Weisman (seated right, behind camera) directs *GRAVEROBBERERS*, filming Morley's disintegrating motorcycle-riding corpse from the back of a pickup truck.

towns of Rhinebeck and Red Hook, New York, over a span of 19 days and for the sum of \$137,000 (with both producer Mishkin and director Weisman deferring their salaries in exchange for a share of the profits), the production marked Weisman's debut as a feature film director.

When asked what portions of the film he was directly involved with, Lew Mishkin responded, "Everything! A year of my life! I made every deal, I hired every person, I drove the truck when necessary. Our production manager/assistant director quit on the second day. I ended up being my own production manager for the entire film and assistant director for a week—never having been an assistant director before."

Did such a close involvement with the day-to-day details of a location shoot place any strain on the producer/director relationship? "Oh, yes. We did raise our voices occasionally, we hollered and screamed. Interestingly enough, and I'm not saying this because it's a cute answer, the right person won most of the arguments. We basically came in on budget, with what we think is a much better film than we had any right to do."

In order to meet that budget, the production was stocked on the performing side with film newcomers, and filled out on the technical side—aside from key professionals—with student interns from nearby Bard college (who were actually paid a token \$100 a week, Mishkin being a firm

believer that anything gotten for free isn't usually worth the price). According to director Weisman—who also scripted *PELVIS* and *FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE*, and who treats interviews with the same level of seriousness that he brings to the subject of necrophilia—getting the full cooperation of the fledgling cast and crew was not difficult, not if you knew the secret: "Fear works good," he said. "Fear and the promise of food. We shot in the winter—I really wanted the upstate New York look, that barren tree, varicose veins across the sky kind of look. And it was very, very cold. So the promise of, 'If you do this right, you can go to a warm place,' was very effective. I'm only half-kidding."

Even with such compelling motivations, the gruesome subject matter of *GRAVEROBBERERS* sometimes called for more sacrifice than anyone was ready to deliver. For lead Elizabeth Mannino, that time came during the filming of a dream sequence in which Nora's still-beating heart is

ripped from her body. "She was very uncomfortable," said Weisman. "She had to do an upper-body, topless cast first—those were not her actual breasts that were ripped apart. So she had to sit for a very complicated, rubber prosthesis, and that was no great shakes. We sort of built this thing around her, like the magician's table trick, and her actual head was attached to the phony body and she had to sit in a sort of chair contraption. And she kind of got weirded out. She said, 'I don't really like this.' She identified with the sentiment—we were all tearing our hearts out, in a way. It's really a metaphor for the movie: doing a movie is like getting your heart torn out . . . while you're *alive*. Reach into your chest and pluck . . . it . . . out."

But, despite a slightly queasy heroine, despite rousing the locals from their sleep with a hectic, nocturnal graveyard shoot, despite the confusion on the roadways after Weisman and company set up dummy signs pointing to the fictional town of Newbury, the director said he is delighted with the way *GRAVEROBBERERS* worked out. Still, he harbors a few regrets: "I always wanted one of the ambulance attendants to be a midget, because it would have been so much weirder. In the local casting, there are some things I would have liked to have done: I'd have liked to fill out some of the scenes with more bodies, alive and dead; I would like to have spent more time with the high school cheerleaders. [Pause. *Extremely* provocative laughter.]

Yes. Definitely."

"It was a rushed project," agreed Arnold Gargiulo, Jr., who, assisted by Nick Santaramo, Bill Messina, Henry Delaney, and Tom Martinek, handled special makeup effects for GRAVEROBBER. "We had to compromise," said Gargiulo. "Straw asked me 'Are you happy with a lot of your effects in this movie?' And I said, 'Honestly, no.' But I think even with a big budget project you have problems like that. For some reason, you always have to say 'Well, you never have enough money or time.' But on this thing we *really* didn't have enough money or time.

"What's good about Straw and Lew is that they told me, before I was even hired, exactly what they wanted," continued Gargiulo. "And they asked me if I could be totally prepared for everything. But if they came up with a last minute idea, we just couldn't do it. I'm used to that, though. I'm used to working fast on low-budget productions."

The limitations of both time and money do show in GRAVEROBBER. Not that it's a total disaster. Technically, the movie's as polished a production as one could wish, given the tight budget. Romanian director of photography, Anghel Deca, here working on his first American feature, knows how to position a camera, and how to light. Katherine Quittner's synthesized score blazes no new paths, but is suitably lush and atmospheric. And, while Elizabeth Mannino is a little stiff (no pun intended) in the role of Nora, David Gregory, as the oversexed mortician, does what he can with his role, while actor/mime Kelvin Keraga's Morley is appropriately creepy (he's no Tall Man, though).

But, despite the promise of perversions beyond imagination, and a satirical emphasis on the health risks of sex in the '90s (Henry rather inelegantly rationalizes electro-necrophilia with: "It's safe sex now, 'cause we can't get AIDS from dead people"), the film neither becomes graphic enough to qualify as true horror, nor outrageous enough to successfully work as comedy.

Of late, Lew Mishkin has been taking a good, hard look at his life in the industry, and wondering how he's managed to hang on all these years. "There are times I'm not sure that I have," he said. "There are times I'm not sure why; there are times I'm not sure why I wanted to." Candidly, he admits that he has grown tired of the business, and is seriously considering folding the Mishkin banner for good. At the same time, he is talking with Weisman about another, non-genre project. If that goes through, Mishkin International will have received at least a temporary reprieve. If it doesn't, then one of America's oldest indies, the company that survived both changing mores and Andy Milligan, may finally have met its end. □



MONSTROSITY (1988) Milligan's last horror for Mishkin Int'l.

ANDY MILLIGAN

With eleven horror films to his credit, Milligan is one of the most prolific but least talented hacks to work in the genre. Based on Staten Island and a veteran of New York's garment industry who often made his own costumes, Milligan bought his first 16mm camera in 1961 and made THE NAKED WITCH for Mishkin Int'l., a "nudie" about a 19th century witch who is revived in modern-day New Jersey. Milligan went on to make a quartet of horror films for Mishkin between 1969 and 1971 (see posters above), returning to work for the company in 1988 (left), while being equally prolific in the sexploitation market. Working with budgets from \$7,500, but rarely more than \$20,000, Milligan is a virtual one-man production unit.



Milligan on location, a prolific but largely untalented horror hack.

NORMANICUS

DONOVAN'S LESS THAN AWESOME EXPERIENCE

How Paul Donovan's time travel epic got dubbed NORMAN'S AWESOME EXPERIENCE.

By Ian Johnston

Usually, if you walk out of a movie theatre having seen the unexpected, that's a good thing.

But not if you're the director.

That's exactly what Paul Donovan saw when viewing his film, *NORMANICUS*, (aka *A SWITCH IN TIME*) for the first time.

The film he shot was not the movie on the screen. At least not entirely.

The time travel movie, shot on location in Switzerland and Argentina, centers on a nerdy scientist named Norman (Tom McCamus) and his two dishonest cohorts, model Erica (Laurie Patin) and her photographer/lover Umberto (Jacques Lussier). Thanks to a crazed scientist, all three are accidentally hurtled back in time to Switzerland at the time of Christ. Stumbling across a primitive village, the three visitors from the future set about upgrading the standards of the natives, which puts them in direct conflict with the ruling Roman Empire.

To capture this on film, the Canadian director took a small Nova Scotian crew to the Argentinian mountains and built a primitive village by hand. Food was brought to the crew by ox-cart, the Argentinian cavalry was enlisted to play the Roman cavalry, gun-toting border guards were hired to protect the set, authentic Roman costumes were shipped in from Italy, working catapults were built, and hundreds of extras were hired for the elaborate battle scenes.

"It was the adventure of a lifetime," said Donovan during filming of his latest project *GEORGE'S ISLAND*, a pirate ghost story. "That's why it's so painful for me to be unhappy with the results."

Donovan shot the film in 1986, near the ski resort town of San Martin de los Antes,



Donovan, directing his new fantasy film *GEORGE'S ISLAND*.

located in northern Patagonia at the foot of the Andes mountains. "The location looked like Switzerland of 2000 years ago," said Donovan about choosing Argentina. "It wasn't too expensive or intolerably remote from civilization. There were lots of extras available, and, since it was summer, plenty of hotels were empty for the cast and crew."

Donovan had more than just the logistics to contend with. "We had to conform our Canadian crew to Argentinian ways of doing business," said Donovan. That meant bribes to get what was needed through customs, which ate up a surprising chunk of the \$2-3 million budget.

But the real problems for the director began late in postproduction when his company, Salter Street Films, ran out of money. Norstar Entertainment Inc., an investor in the film, bought out the project at that point, and promptly fired Donovan.

"I was forcibly removed," said Donovan. "Everything was going perfect until the end. Then there was a divergence of opinion on how it should be finished and that was it."

Peter Simpson, president of Norstar Entertainment Inc. and co-producer (with Donovan) on the film, refused to comment in detail on the firing. "I have no time to discuss ancient history about a film," said Simpson. "Donovan fucked up, what can I say?"

Following Donovan's removal, new scenes were shot, and other scenes were excised, creating a film much lighter in tone than Donovan had envisioned. "The film seems like it's directed by two different people," said Donovan. "There's no set up for the characters. It's been cut down for action. But the action doesn't play without developing the characters."

A scene in which Erica and Umberto execute a villager for not bathing was removed from the film. "Anything that shows these characters are evil has been removed," said Donovan. "They just seem stupid, and even likeable. Likeable villains? How could it work?"

But what was taken out is not as disruptive as what was left in. A meaningless scene in which Umberto uses a telescope, invented by Norman, to peer at a woman undressing was left in. Donovan says he shot that brief scene, but it was originally part of a whole series of similar scenes to establish Umberto's character. Only the Peeping Tom scene was kept.

"They [Norstar] were more than happy



To recreate scenes of Rome on the march, Donovan shot in Argentina with costumes imported from Italy.

to leave that in," said Donovan. "on its own though, it's totally gratuitous."

Donovan said he also intended to have Latin spoken in the film to be authentic, but in several scenes the Latin and subtitles don't match. A scene in which Nero receives a gift of an American Express card ("Don't leave Rome without it," he's advised) was also added.

"Most were meant as jokes," said Donovan of the additions he had no hand in. "Individually they might be funny, but they work at the expense of the scenes. Most of the new scenes I find somewhat embarrassing."

That said, the filmmaker still likes the movie. "The quality of the imagery is still wonderful," said Donovan. "The special effects are dazzling. But no amount of special effects can compensate for a lack of clarity."

As *A SWITCH IN TIME* the film had only a few public screenings before appearing on Canadian pay TV. The Samuel Goldwyn Company, which picked up Norstar's *HELLO MARY LOU: PROM NIGHT II* passed on the U.S. theatrical rights. Norstar sold the video rights to South Gate Films, who released the film last November as *NORMAN'S AWESOME EXPERIENCE*.

"It's a relatively clever title for marketing because they're riding the backs of *BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE*," said Donovan. "But it does accurately describe the type of film it is." □

Rome built in a daze.

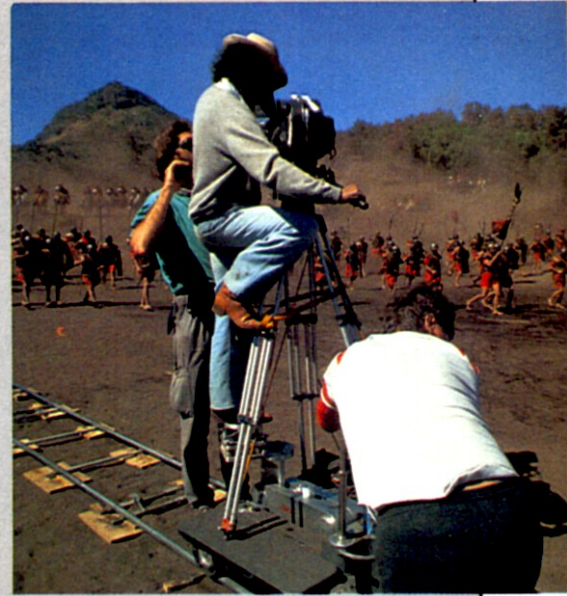
By Gary Kimber

After filming *NORMANICUS* in the wilds of Argentina, a major conflict developed between writer/director Paul Donovan and Peter Simpson, the film's executive producer, about how to shape the footage to the best commercial advantage. Ron Oliver, staff writer for Simpson's Simcom-Norstar company and screenwriter of *HELLO MARY LOU: PROM NIGHT 2* was brought in to do rewrites. Oliver thought Donovan's script was "all pretty lame," he said. "I got roped into trying to make it better. I just didn't understand what it was about."

Oliver said Donovan's assembled footage seemed "disjointed. They tried cutting it repeatedly without success," he said. A decision was made to do some reshooting, with Donovan supervising the writing and directing. Working with Donovan on the new scenes, it was Oliver's task to "make them funnier."

It's not surprising that Simpson failed to find humor in Donovan's film. Oliver estimated that Simpson's company lost over a million dollars in backing the project. But Donovan didn't find Simpson's idea of humor at all funny. "There was some comedic stuff which was written in that wasn't to Paul's liking," said Oliver. "The two's taste in comedy was so different it led to a problem. Peter figured since he put up the money it was his film to do with as he liked. Paul, by now just a hired gun, didn't want to be involved with the reshoots, so he left."

Despite having an admitted lack of affinity for the material, Oliver was



Ambition on a low budget, setting up an elaborate dolly shot during filming in Argentina in 1987.

asked at the 12th hour to direct the reshoots himself. Donovan was not cooperative and "tried to convince the actors not to participate, saying it was unfair to the film he tried to make," said Oliver. The actors did return, however, for Oliver's five-day shoot, which he estimates added 20 minutes of new scenes to the film.

But in Oliver's view, it wasn't enough. "In five days what could you do?" said Oliver. "You couldn't change the story that much. The flaws in the story were ingrained in the original script. Basically, the band-aid was not big enough to cover the wound. It didn't matter how much money you put into it, there was just no way to fix it." □

Norman (Tom McCamus), despite his 20th century know-how, must fight the Romans hand-to-hand.



MILLENNIUM

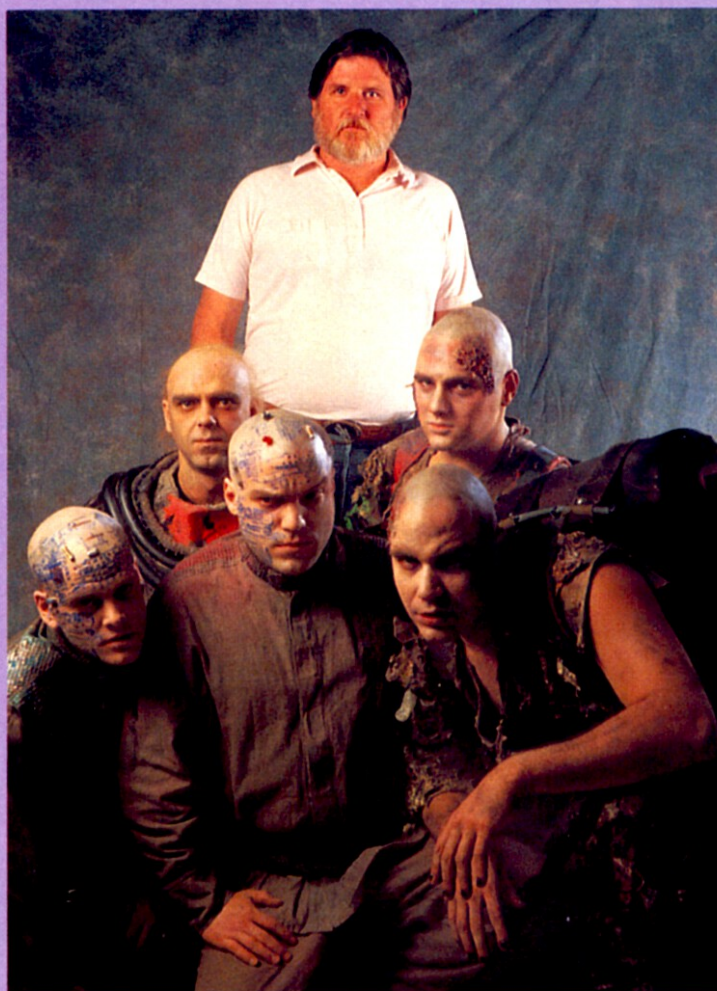
For novelist John Varley it was a ten-year lesson in how things are done in Hollywood.

By J.D. Macdonald

Adapting his own short story in writing *MILLENNIUM*, noted science fiction writer John Varley got an education in compromise and accommodation in the film business and how things are done in Hollywood. "Unless you produce and direct [the film] yourself, you don't get exactly what you want," said Varley. "Having heard George Lucas talk about his experiences, I suggest that even if you do write, produce, and direct you don't get exactly what you want. But if you're going to work [in Hollywood], you have to accept that compromises are necessary somewhere along the line.

"I think in this one I did rather more than I should have in the way of compromising," Varley said. "It's just that after a while, getting the thing made, one way or another, becomes your overwhelming desire. Or at least it happened to me. I never stepped back far enough from the whole thing to see that it was no longer making the sense that it did when I first started."

Varley, whose novels have won both Hugo and Nebula awards, science fiction's top prizes, adapted *MILLENNIUM* from his short story, "Air Raid," about a group of time travelers who kidnap soon-to-be-victims from a doomed airliner, which first appeared in 1977 in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. "Air Raid" was read by an assistant to film producer John Foreman, who contacted the author with the idea of buying an option. Bringing the short



Varley, award-winning novelist-turned-screenwriter, poses with the pollution and radiation scarred extras of *MILLENNIUM*, during Toronto, Canada filming in 1988.

story to the screen would eventually take over a decade.

"They liked the action," said Varley, from his home in Eugene, Oregon. "And they were attracted to that as a sequence within a larger film." Foreman asked Varley if he had any ideas for expanding the short story, in order to come up with a story conflict and resolution.

Varley attended a meeting

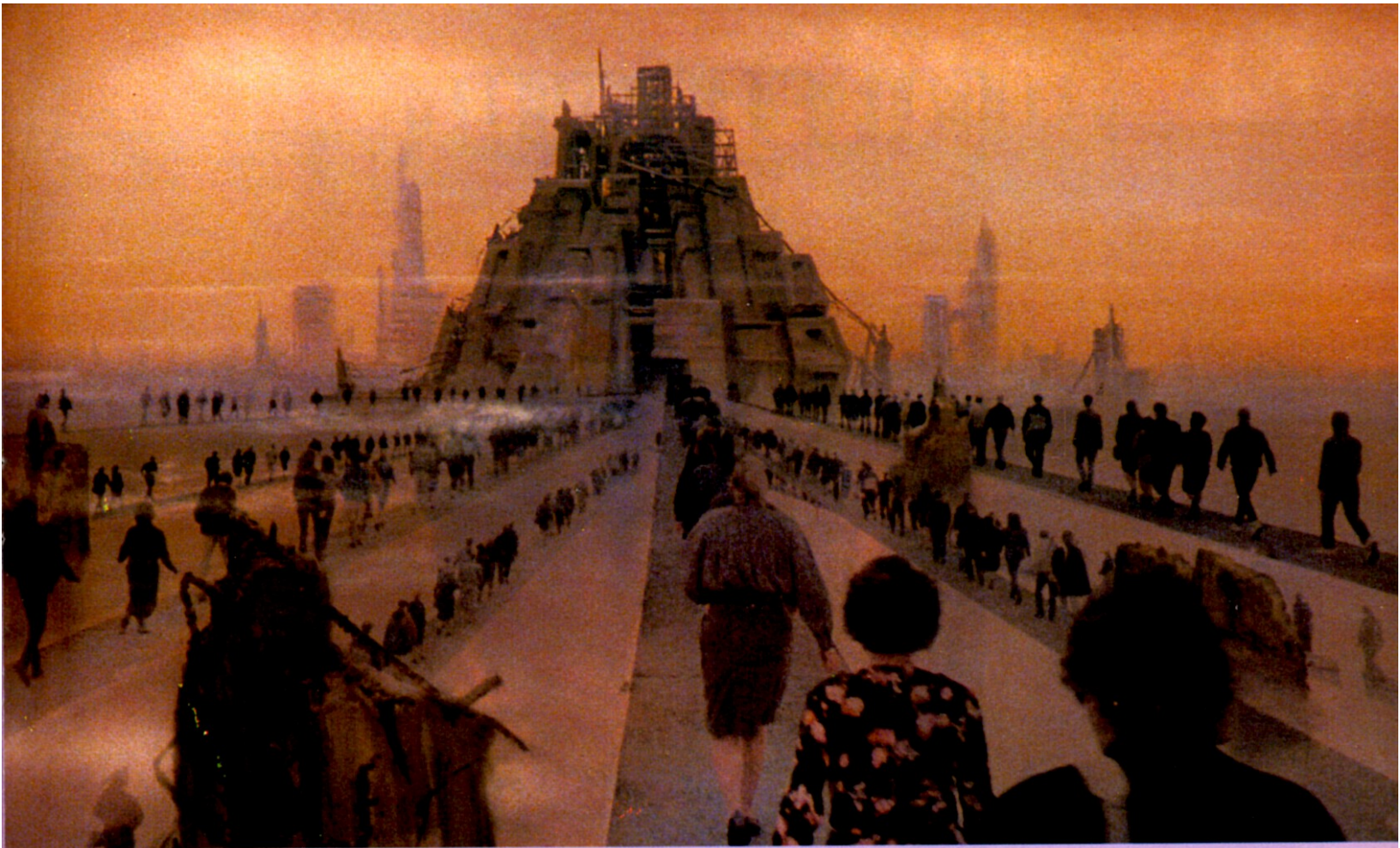
with Foreman and then director Douglas Trumbull, who was preparing to film *BRAINSTORM* at the time. The other principal producers were David Begelman and Ray Fields. "We agreed that I would write a treatment," Varley said. "I told them various ideas about time travel and different things that could be done." At the meeting it was decided that Varley would write both a treatment

and a novel, but not the screenplay itself, since Foreman wanted a professional screenwriter to handle that job.

While Varley was writing the novel of *Millennium*, Foreman started interviewing screenwriters. Meanwhile, Varley had been dropping the idea that he would like to write the screenplay himself, and when the first screenwriter "turned in something that nobody liked very much," Varley was offered the job. He wrote what would be the first of about 10 drafts. "The broad strokes of the story remained pretty much the same" from the first screenplay to the last "but there's a lot of details in the novel that aren't there in the movie. Various of those details have been in different drafts of the screenplay, on and off, depending on which ones the director liked—the director of the moment, and we're talking six directors here.

"There are just so many things to stop or stall a screenplay," Varley said, "and I think over the years everything happened to *MILLENNIUM* that could have." The problems began when Natalie Wood died during the production of *BRAINSTORM*, and Douglas Trumbull got into a dispute with MGM over whether or not to finish the film. Trumbull did finish *BRAINSTORM*, but "because he bruised so many feelings at MGM, he was definitely *persona non grata*. So he was off the *MILLENNIUM* project."

Then Richard Rush was brought in as director. "I began to have meetings with him to see what kind of rewrites he wanted to have done. That's



Snatched airline passengers head toward the time gate to flee into the far future, not quite the effects spectacle Varley was promised would save the film's muddled ending.

always the first step. Everytime we hired a director, I would have to talk with him to find out what parts of the story he liked and what parts he didn't like. I think that's one of the basic mistakes that comes down in this business. Everybody wants to add his part into it.

"By the time Richard Rush got through with it," Varley said, "he ended up doing the writing. I turned in a draft, and then he put it into his word-processor, and it mysteriously came out very different. But oddly enough, he had done it by taking different sections of the novel—which he really liked—almost verbatim, and plugging it in, but with a whole different slant on everything. It read to me like *THE STUNTMAN, PART TWO*. People shouting at each other all the time, and there was a lot of unpleasantness and no real feeling of team spirit, that these people in the future were actually really working toward some big goal. It was all egos. Sniping at each other." Rush also argued with the producers. "As Foreman put it,"

“Unless you produce or direct you don't get what you want. Getting the thing made becomes your overwhelming desire. I lost sight of what the original vision was.”

Varley recalled, "he managed to take a go project and make it into a turn-around deal." And it was in turn-around for a good long time after that.

"At one point, Randal Kleiser was brought aboard, and I had a few conversations with him. I don't really know how that fell apart. I was farther from the project at that time. So that's the third director.

"John Foreman went to Russia at one point, and came back with glowing details about how we're going to make it over there, with the cooperation of the Red Army. I can pinpoint that in time. That was the week before Chernobyl. I don't think that Chernobyl had anything to do with sinking the project in Russia, but I wouldn't swear to it. Kiev was one of the

places he visited. Anyway, that fell apart. And finally, what eventually went through was some sort of financial deal that I have never completely understood, involving Canadian investors."

The next director was Canadian Phil Borsos. "We were having meetings on the last day of Expo '86 in Vancouver. So I was doing another rewrite with him. There were many, many things going on behind the scenes at this time—getting the international agreements, and various things that, for one reason or another, sunk the Borsos deal."

Another director was hired, Alvin Rakoff, and the project came close to shooting at Vancouver's Bridge Studios. "We actually had some draw-

ings and things; a production designer signed up," said Varley. "We're talking crew. We had signed Michael Caine to play the role of Bill Smith. That was so tantalizing—and then it fell apart again and we had to roll up the offices within a day and go home. And everybody was owed money. So for a month there I kept calling John Foreman to find out what's going on, and he said 'any day now, we'll be ready.'"

In the end, the film was shot in Toronto, with Michael Anderson as director. "When the production finally did start we were really under the gun. Because of financial reasons, our principal photography had to be finished on the 30th of June of '88."

Problems continued. "We ended up just not having enough days to design it and enough days to shoot it," Varley said. "Everything was under the gun, everything was under huge time pressure, and a certain amount, about halfway through, of financial pressure. And it began to go over budget. For various reasons, the completion guaran-

MILLENNIUM

BOOK VS. FILM

Though it's Varley's script, the film lacks the complexity of his 1983 novel and the story that inspired them both.

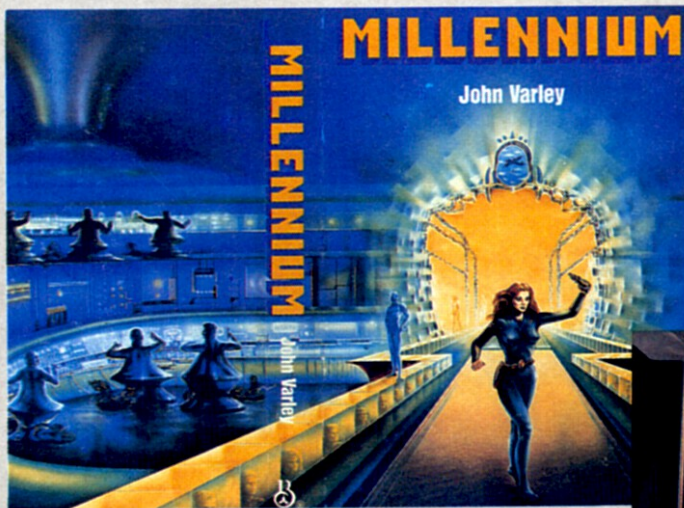
By Dennis Fischer

John Varley's *Millennium* isn't a great science fiction novel or an all-time classic, but it is an above average piece of work from one of the most readable and popular writers in the field.

Varley wrote the novel in 1983, based on his 1977 short story "Air Raid," selling the screen rights to MGM/UA, which holds the copyright. Though the film, eventually produced by Gladden Entertainment and released by 20th Century-Fox, credits "Air Raid" as its basis, with Varley doing his own adaptation, it is clearly more an adaptation of the novel which gives it its name.

Almost every chapter of Varley's book is named after a famous time travel story of the past, Varley's way of acknowledging his debt to previous writers in the field. Particularly significant is his use of the term "twonky," after the famous Henry Kuttner story filmed in

Cheryl Ladd as Baltimore.



Ron Walotsky's dust jacket for the hardcover edition of Varley's novel depicting Louise Baltimore, stunner at hand, android Sherman and the time gate. Inset: The movie's biomechanoid council of rulers.

1952 by Arch Oboler, in which a device from the future ends up in the past with disastrous results.

Varley's book is well-structured so as to avoid needless repetition. Unfortunately, this is exactly where the film fails, losing its audience halfway through by repeating scenes (albeit often from a different angle and with some new slant), a structure that stops the film dead when it needs to be picking up speed. It never recovers.

Those seeing *MILLENNIUM* without having read the book have no hint that it is science fiction until halfway through the proceedings, an approach that creates a sense of mystery about what is going on, but leads to the omission of much of the book's most interesting material.

Lost is Varley's character background for time travel commando Louise Baltimore (inadequately played in the film by Cheryl Ladd). Baltimore is one of the privileged of the bleak future envisioned by Varley. She is part of mankind's final generation, suffering the long-term effects of pollution, biochemical warfare, genetic warfare, and other abuses of the environment.

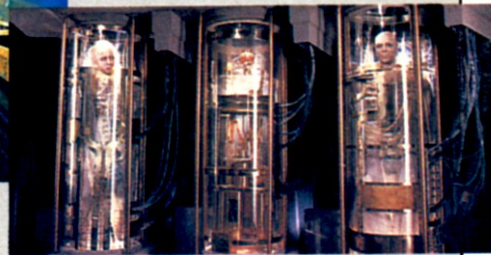
Her actual body is deformed but she wears a skin suit which gives her an attractive, healthy appearance.

Varley's future is so filled with despair that suicide is commonplace; the people are so malformed that they are no longer able to reproduce, which leads to their scheme of raiding doomed flights for healthy humans to somehow perpetuate the human race. An example of the imaginative detail of Varley's book—one idea kept by the film—is his notion that the future is so polluted that the time travellers coming to the present cannot stand the very freshness of our air and force pollutants into their lungs via mist sprays and cigarettes.

The Baltimore character in the book is a complex one. She's a tough bitch with a realistic, if depressing, outlook on things, who exhibits a kind of gallows humor. To prevent a time paradox, she must continually come in contact with crash investigator Bill Smith (played in the film by Kris Kristofferson), and initially she feels only contempt for him based on what she perceives as his wasted life. She

learns compassion when she gets to know Smith and she eventually falls in love with him, though she is too cynical to admit this to herself. Perhaps to accommodate the casting of Ladd, the character is simplified in the film, her hard edge removed. As played by Ladd, Baltimore is largely an enigma.

In the book, the physicist Mayer (played in the film by



Daniel J. Travanti), has guessed what the future time travellers are up to and is obsessed about it because his daughter supposedly "died" on one of these flights and he's determined to find out what happened to her. In the film, it is Smith, as a child, who is on the fateful 1963 flight where a second stunner is lost. The change makes no sense because it sets up a situation ripe with potential for a time paradox, something the future travellers are desperate to avoid because it could mean the end of their civilization. The rule maintained by the time travellers

continued on page 59

A 20th Century-Fox release of a Gladden Entertainment production. 8/89, 108 mins. In Dolby and color. Director, Michael Anderson. Producer, Douglas Leiterman. Co-producer, Robert Vince. Executive producers: John Foreman, Freddie Fields, Louis M. Silverman, P. Gael Mourant. Supervising producer, John M. Eckert. Director of photography, Rene Ohashi. Editor, Ron Wisman. Production designer, Gene Rudolph. Art director, Charles Dunlop. Special visual effects, Light and Motion. Costume designer, Olga Dimitrov. Music, Eric N. Robertson. Sound, Jim Hopkins. Screenplay by John Varley, based on his short story "Air Raid."

Bill Smith	Kris Kristofferson
Louise Baltimore	Cheryl Ladd
Arnold Mayer	Daniel J. Travanti
Sherman	Robert Joy
Walters	Lloyd Bochner

tor would not add in any more money. The solution began to be to cut things here and there, and I think it shows in some areas. Several of my favorite scenes didn't get filmed, and then a few more got cut afterwards. I was not happy about that.

"It's not what I envisioned at various points over the 10 years," said Varley of the finished film. "It's a question of having worked on it so long, in so many versions, that to an extent, I lost sight of what the original vision was. And there are so many parts of other people's visions in there that I don't feel that it's entirely my baby anymore."

If he had it all to do over again, Varley would still have optioned his story, but isn't sure whether he would have gotten involved personally. "My choice all along was either try to keep as much of my vision as I could, or step aside and let somebody else do it... I did learn a lot, and it was a lot of fun most of the time."

Varley has one regret. "I feel like I fought hard on this, but maybe if I fought harder it would have worked. I was never happy with the ending of the film, from the very first draft. And I was never given any choice on that. [We] discussed various ways to end it. And I always felt that the only honest one was that she would stay behind, because she was dying, the entire civilization was dying. The people they had managed to salvage were sent on ahead. But that was never granted, that option; it was always felt that the two lovers had to go together, you can't have a downbeat ending."

Varley had been convinced to go with an upbeat ending "when Doug Trumbull was aboard, because he said, 'don't worry, I'll give you a lightshow where everybody will step out of the theatre and they won't care that it didn't make any sense,' right? And that kind of thinking held on right through the budget that it was finally made under, where we didn't have the money to provide that kind of lightshow. It never made any sense, really. I tried at various times to point this out to people, but nobody ever listened to me." □

MILLENNIUM

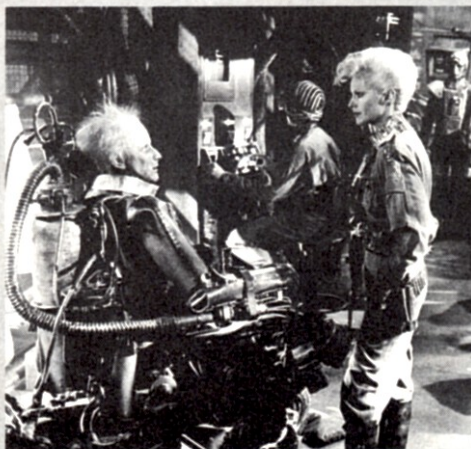
FUTURE SCHLOCK

An original, intelligent, hard science fiction drama gets dumbed-up by Hollywood.

By J. D.
Macdonald

The basic premise of the film *MILLENNIUM*, the novel *Millennium*, and the short story "Air Raid" on which both film and novel were based—all three written by John Varley—are in agreement. But somewhere along the line the story got dumbed way down, so that what could have been an original, intelligent, hard-science fiction drama winds up looking like a TV movie of the week released to theatres by mistake. What went wrong? Darned if I know—although having a producer, a coproducer, a supervising producer, and four executive producers listed in the opening credits may be a clue.

Is there anything to like about this film? Yes. Varley's basic premise is refreshingly original, repopulating a ravaged future with would-be airline fatalities who won't be missed, by snatching them from planes about to crash. When we first see the pit at the sight of the downed airliner, the scene is a visual allusion to the excavation in *Tycho* from 2001. We know that some important alien artifact is down there. The scene in the hotel room, where crash investigator Kris Kristofferson and futuristic commando Cheryl Ladd get to know each other, is full of mirrors, symbolizing double meanings and duplicity. And their bit with the apple is a nice Biblical allusion, because they will be doing the Adam and Eve routine on the far side of her Time Gate at the end. There are some good makeup effects in the far future where everyone is dying of the mutated plagues and genetic diseases that have forced Ladd's people to snatch healthy people from the past to



Ladd with wheelchair-ridden Brent Carver (l), head of Snatch Team Operations, and Robert Joy as Sherman (r), rendered as just another movie mechanical man.

carry on their race.

If there is an overwhelming problem in the picture, it is people standing around telling each other what they already know. "This seems to be my day for spelling out the obvious," says Sherman the android. It sure is, but he isn't alone. Everyone seems to have the habit.

When the Snatch Team is looking into the past they run into an area of Temporal Censorship. Logically, most people in their society, and everybody in their line of work, would be intimately familiar with the phenomenon. So one of the members of the Snatch Team pipes up brightly, "What does Temporal Censorship mean?" Temporal Censorship, it turns out, is the inability to see the past. It's caused by having the Gate open, or having a person from the future in the past. You can only open the Gate once at any given time, so you can't meet yourself and cause a paradox.

Not that the filmmakers don't abandon Temporal Censorship whenever it's convenient. They have two-way voice comms with the past and pass material back and forth with gay abandon,

and Temporal Censorship be damned.

Throughout the film, inconsistency seems to be the name of the game. For example, Bill first gets a clue that something weird is going on when he's listening to the cockpit voice recorder tape, and a member of the flight crew who just checked the cabin says that all of the passengers are dead and burned. But we saw that cabin during the opening minutes of the film, and the passengers weren't dead, and they weren't burned. The dead and burned bodies are in the book,

not the movie.

By the time the final credits roll, we've gone through two plane crashes, with not one dead, burned body on screen. If a movie relies on its audience having read the book, that movie is a failure. On that ground, this film fails to measure up.

MILLENNIUM should have been more cold-blooded. Ladd needs to be a tough, smart bitch, not the Miss Low-IQ of the year 2989 we meet on the wide screen. Kristofferson needs to be hard-charging and too curious for his own good. The snatches need to be fast, chaotic and violent—as presented, they're more organized than a real debarking at the scheduled destination of a regular flight. We need to see the burned bodies being substituted. If Kristofferson takes his shirt off, Ladd should too. A love conquers all subtext is completely out of place, while the initial encounter of Ladd with Kristofferson as a young boy, as the sole survivor of an airline disaster, is less than unnecessary—it violates the internal logic of the plot, while serving no purpose.

Final score: weep for what might have been. □



Tales from the GIMLI

Canadian director Guy Maddin's *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL* is fast becoming the hottest ticket on America's midnight movie circuit, and has been compared to David Lynch's *ERASERHEAD* as well as the work of Bunuel and Cocteau. A totally unclassifiable slice of tortured surrealism, the

movie recreates the eerie, suffocating nature of early expressionist cinema and provides food for semiotic discussion among devotees of underground filmmaking.

The story opens at a hospital in the small Canadian town of Gimli, where an elderly woman tells a legendary story to her grandchildren as they wait for their mother to die. She tells of two men, Gunnar and Einar, affected by an unspecified epidemic at the turn of the century. Both men share the same hospital room and Gunnar tells Einar a dark secret about how he "murdered" his beautiful bride Snjofridur by passing her the deadly plague during their courtship. Einar has a tale to tell about Gunnar's wife too. But his shocking story will both unite them in grief and eventually make them sworn enemies.

TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL makes provocative use of necrophilia, Icelandic myths, AIDS, synchronized dance routines, anesthesia by glove puppet, surgery by scythe, tinted black and white photography and all manner of silent movie icon madness. Starring Kyle McCulloch, Michael Gottli, and Angela Heck, the \$22,000 home movie is a charming, pretentious, funny, startling, and utterly hypnotic experience. Currently making the midnight movie rounds from Washington DC-based Circle Films, who released Vincent Ward's *THE NAVIGATOR*, Maddin's film was "discovered" by Ben Bazenholtz, the man who turned David Lynch's *ERASERHEAD* into a cult hit. "After I made the film in 1988, Bazenholtz saw it and immediately put it into the Quad Cinema in New York," said the 30 year-old Maddin. "It's doing very well, the audience is growing, and it has been booked indefinitely. Midnight showings have now just begun in Chicago and Los Angeles."

But Maddin didn't purposely set out to make a cult movie. "I just made it really," he explained. "I shot it on weekends spread over a few months. Sometimes I got bored and didn't film for a while. So I was very relaxed and informal in my approach. It was the easiest filmmaking experience I'll probably ever have. I didn't have any market in mind as I come from Winnipeg where there's a tiny film community, and, when I started making *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL*, no homegrown films were being shown outside the city. So I had no intention of pushing it anywhere. I just wanted to make a movie my friends could be in and see. People ask me if it's a massive put-on or a serious movie. All I can say is whenever I see a movie that amuses me, the more straight-faced it is, the better."

The Icelandic influences in *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL* are due to Maddin spending his summers in Nordic communities to understand his own heritage. "I was always forced to attend speeches given by Icelandic elderly women elected as festival maidens," said Maddin. "*TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL* is my revenge on those people and so is the buttock wrestling. That's part of Icelandic culture and the object is to hoist your opponent up with all sorts of nimble foot movements required of the combatants. My actors couldn't do any of those so they just grabbed and hugged each other warmly. The movie ends with an Icelandic diplomat's speech about the evils of drink. Well, I think that's what it is anyway. When I was scoring the movie, I decided the only music I wanted for that scene was bagpipes. Don't ask me why, I just felt in a Scottish mood! *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL* was recently invited to the Reykjavik Film Festival. I heard nothing, but I'm probably excom-



Top left, *GIMLI HOSPITAL* star Michael Gottli as Gunnar; above, the film's novice Canadian director Guy Maddin.

HOSPITAL

by Alan Jones



municated and my picture is on a wanted poster at all Icelandic airports!"

Maddin is also able to explain the film's often puzzling use of fish imagery. "The actual town of Gimli in Manitoba is a good, old middle-of-the-prairies fishing village," he said. "They are fish crazy and seafood is served with everything, including Christmas dinner! I didn't go out of my way to include all the fish. It's part of the Gimli culture. In truth, I tried to cut most of the fish references down, but somehow they remained at the fore."

Presenting his material in silent movie form wasn't a budgetary consideration for Maddin. That's the way he wanted to do it. He said, "I've always liked a minimalist style," said Maddin. "My favorite kind of movie is the curious part-talkie genre. You

know, the ones made in December, 1927. THE JAZZ SINGER opened in November and directors scrambled to add soundtracks to catch the new wave. I always liked dialogue in the form of quickly shot monologues. I'm charmed by the free movement back and forth between the then, new, and old mediums. It was a far simpler process for a beginner to handle too. I would have done exactly the same if I'd had a million dollars."

Likewise, Maddin is rather pleased TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL practically represents the whole history of cinema thrown into 72 minutes. "I'm not against modernism," he said. "I just found myself returning to the wonderful world

of the past, time and time again, as I had access to this great film archive at Winnipeg University. I watched old movies constantly and M, BIRTH OF A NATION, and D.W. Griffith homages are all included in the film. I'm totally sick of modern cinema and I just made what came naturally. Since I hadn't seen a color movie for three years at the point I made TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL, the language and rhythm of silent black and white features came as second nature. I liked tinting the print to alter the mood indicating a change in emotion—a

heavy influence from Griffith's BROKEN BLOSSOMS."

As a result, Maddin is happy the film looks 60 years old. "In many ways I wish it looked older," he said. "For some late night engagements the 16mm print has been blown up to 35mm. It works even better as it's scratchier and grainier. One reviewer said TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL looked like rotting images of past cinema."

Kyle McCulloch plays a dual role in blackface, another nostalgic throwback to the past, according to Maddin. "I'm glad audiences are seeing it as nostalgia," said Maddin. "It's an uncomfortable convention, one I've always liked. I've never thought about it until now, but I suppose it could be another connection to THE JAZZ SINGER. Kyle McCulloch insisted he wanted to

play a part in blackface as well as the Einar character. 'Just do it' he said, 'and decide later if you want to keep it.' So I did. It was a potentially touchy subject, but no one's complained yet."

Maddin had no film school training. "I worked in a bank and one day I quit to fool around with a camera," he said. "I've been a filmmaker for 3½ years now, but only recently could I look my mom in the eye and say 'I'm a director.' Now she won't talk to me!" Prior to TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL, Maddin directed a 30 minute short titled THE DEAD FATHER. It went on the festival circuit in a package with 10 other Canadian shorts.

"Last summer Maddin made ARCHANGEL, a full-length feature, again shot in black and white, costing \$350,000. Telefilm Canada, formerly the Canadian Film Foundation, who funded David Cronenberg's early movies, matched the independent money Maddin raised from distributor advances and Arts Council grants. "ARCHANGEL is a love story set in World War I, although I'm thinking of calling it a sex tragedy," said Maddin. "I'm trying to evolve as a director, but I think you could guess it was the work of the same person who made TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL." □



Top right, actor Kyle McCulloch as Einar, the lonely; above, the Gimli Hospital nurses clad in old-fashioned uniforms and posed with the film's period set pieces.

□

REVIEWS

Disturbing apocalyptic future fantasy like cyberpunk Disney

AKIRA

An Akira Committee production. 3/89, 124 mins. In Dolby and color. Director, Katsuhiro Otomo. Director of photography, Katsuji Misawa. Special effects, Takashi Nakamura. Art director, Toshihaur Mizutani. Music, Shoji Yamashiro. Screenplay by Katsuhiro Otomo based on his comic.

With the voices of: Mitsuo Iwara, Nozumo Sasaki, Mami Koyama, Taro Ishida.

by Daniel Schweiger

Few comics-to-film adaptations have the mind-boggling task of animating an 1,800 page graphic novel, yet comics artist-turned-animated-film director Katsuhiro Otomo manages, incredibly, to bring to AKIRA the visceral power and finely detailed artwork evident in his epic comics masterwork. Far more than a breathless exercise in pop color futurism, Otomo provocatively sums up the biblical themes of destruction and rebirth that have marked Japan's evolution, and fixated Nippon's animation since ASTRO BOY.

AKIRA's apocalyptic fantasy is set 31 years in the future in a monolithic neo-Tokyo, rebuilt on the impact crater of its nuclear destruction. This city might symbolize man's resurrection, but the steel and glass phoenix is also the epitome of heartless capitalism.

Government soldiers ruthlessly club demonstrators, rebels attack with no regard to civilian casualties, and aimless youths wreck the streets in motorcycle rumbles.

The film chronicles gang rivals Kaneda and Tetsuo who discover their nascent psychic abilities as they battle with the power elite to possess AKIRA, a prescient organic mass with awesome psychic powers, a government experiment gone awry. A group of psi-powered government mutants join with Kaneda and beautiful rebel Kay to destroy Tetsuo, corrupted by the power of his newfound psychic abilities, before Tokyo is annihilated for a second time.

Otomo's anti-consumerist message gives AKIRA a disturbing and contemplative power, but he's pursued these naturalistic desires at comprehensibility's expense. In condensing the story's lengthy print serialization, Otomo sacrifices character development for orgiastic Armageddon. Cyphers abound, particularly with Akira, who is turned from the comics' exploitable child to a mass of brain tissue. Otomo goes for a mystical 2001 climax, a barrage of light,



Kaneda, a psi-powered street gang rumbler, fighting for the survival of Neo-Tokyo.

floating skyscrapers, and childhood flashbacks. It's all confusing albeit hauntingly beautiful.

AKIRA works best when it uses action instead of dialogue to express itself. Taking stylistic cues from BLADE RUNNER and BRAZIL, the movie never fails to amaze with its boundless imagination. Motorcycles leave color trails, Tetsuo reforms an arm out of circuitry, teddy bears and toy cars become ravenous biomechanical creatures. As in other Japanese animation, flesh is always churning, with Tetsuo ultimately becoming a Cronenbergian mass of popping skin.

The key to AKIRA's impact lies

with its breathtaking animation, some of the most impressive work to appear since FANTASIA. Otomo's vivid cels become cyberpunk Disney, every bizarre city dweller and scrap of metal given astonishing individuality. AKIRA's movement achieves a fluidity that puts rotoscoping to shame, with dozens of camera planes and steadicam shots giving Neo-Tokyo a cramped texture that even surpasses BLADERUNNER'S 2019 L. A. With its knockout visuals and searing thought, AKIRA might be the first Japanese cartoon to break through the half-assed kiddie shows that Nippon is unfortunately known for. □

Rehash of V done in the name of H.G. Wells

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Paramount TV syndication of a Triumph Entertainment Corp. of Canada production. 10/89, 60 mins. In color. Executive producer, Frank Mancuso, Jr. Producer, Jon Andersen. Production designer, Gavin Mitchell. Executive story consultant, Jeremy Hole.

Dr. Harrison Blackwood Jared Martin
Dr. Suzanne McCullough Lynda Mason Green
John Kincaid Adrian Paul
Debi McCullough Rachel Blanchard
Malzor Denis Forest

by Lawrence Tetewsky

Newly installed executive producer Frank Mancuso, Jr., the maestro behind Paramount's FRIDAY THE 13TH has done the impossible. Nobody ever considered that Paramount's syndicated WAR OF THE WORLDS

Denis Forest and Catherine Disher, the V-inspired alien fascists of WAR OF THE WORLD'S second wave invasion.

series could possibly get worse, but in scrapping the show's connection to H. G. Wells and George Pal's film version, Mancuso's "new, original look and tone" for the series, subtitled THE SECOND WAVE, makes one yearn for the low-level quality of the first year.

Shunting aside the show's original creator and producer, the father-and-son team of Greg and Sam Strangis, who still have financial participation in the series, Mancuso has inexplicably transformed the show's recognizably contemporary milieu into a burned-out pseudo-cyberpunk post-apocalyptic hell *a la* MAD MAX. Derivative is the operative word for the new show. Supplanting the Pal-inspired aliens of last year are extraterrestrial fascists indistin-

guishable from humans in a kind of rehash of V. It's the first season all over again, but with less imagination.

Besides doing away with the Pal-inspired aliens, Mancuso makes the mistake of killing off the show's most popular character, Ironhorse, played by Richard Chavez. Deprived of government funding, returning regulars Jared Martin and Lynda Mason join up with a rag-tag mercenary underground battling the new alien menace.

It's all a poorly contrived rehash of stock situations better done elsewhere, laced with a sense of scientific improbability. Let's just hope Paramount doesn't ask Mancuso to "fix" STAR TREK next! □

JAPANESE ANIMATION Wonders overcoming western prejudice

By Steve Biodrowski

To Western audiences, the phrase "Japanese Animation" conjures up images of round-eyed characters with the limited movements of a cheap Saturday-morning cartoon. Although there is a certain truth to this assessment, more knowledgeable fans know there is more to Japanese animation. Unfortunately, the better examples of the art have, for the most part, been unavailable to American audiences. This situation is changing now, thanks to Jerry Beck and Carl Macek, who formed Streamline Pictures to distribute theatrically to American art houses such premier animated films from Japan as LAPUTA, TWILIGHT OF THE COCKROACHES, LENSMAN, and AKIRA.

Beck is a long-time fan of animation, having helped organize the Los Angeles International Animation Celebration. Although not a fanatic for the Eastern style, he was interested in the work of Osamu Tezuka, creator of such seminal Japanese cartoons as ASTRO BOY. The enthusiastic response of fans, who sold out festival screenings of LAPUTA, and ROBO-TECH: THE MOVIE (the latter produced by Macek), convinced Beck there is an audience interested in viewing the films as they were meant to be seen: uncut on the big screen.

AKIRA is the gem of Streamline's current lineup, but Beck and Macek are looking forward to opening American eyes to the richness and variety of Japanese animation. Streamline is angling to get U.S. rights to WICKED CITY, an animated horror film. "Even more than AKIRA, this is a film that every beer-drinking college student, who couldn't care less about animation, would go see," said Beck, who declined to cite specifics as to its producer or its director. "It's so outrageous—it's like an ELM STREET movie. People are going to be saying, 'You've got to see this.' Originally, we wanted to release that first and create a buzz. It fell through, but I have a feeling we'll end up with it eventually."

Japanese animation has been available on American television screens since the '60s, with the appearance of ASTRO BOY. In the '70s, shows like SPEED-

RACER and CYBORG 9000 became popular on UHF stations around the country. In the mid-'70s, space operas like STAR BLAZERS and BATTLE OF THE PLANETS (Americanized versions of SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO and GATCHAMAN) made their appearance, but poor dubbing and editing prevented an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response.

Theatrical distribution has been more difficult for Japanese animated films to achieve, however. For example, Tezuka's PHOENIX 2772 was cut to 88 minutes and badly dubbed, and NAUSICCA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND was similarly butchered before being released in 1984 by New World Pictures as WARRIORS OF THE WIND. The reason for this difficulty is the difference between American and Japanese perceptions of what animation can do.

Americans basically see animation as a kiddie medium—G-rated storytelling with cute, anthropomorphized animals. To the Japanese, animation is every bit as versatile as live-action. Hence, their cartoons appeal to adults as well as children, including visceral shocks, action-packed violence, and complicated storylines—material that has been, up to now, edited from American versions.

"In America, there's a perception that animation is just talking dinosaurs and singing dogs," said Beck. "But animation is more than that. As an entertainment medium, it can do anything."

"The Japanese are ahead of us," Beck continued, "because the grown-ups don't look at comic books and animation as a babysitter. It's an entertainment

AKIRA, the jewel of Streamline's slate of Japanimation product, boasts a futuristic Neo-Tokyo that outdoes the wonders of BLADERUNNER's 2019 L.A.



LENSMAN, based on the science fiction epic by E.E. "Doc" Smith, boasting computer animated effects, is part of Streamline Pictures' lineup of product.

medium like novels or movies. Within that, anything is possible; there's X-rated, R-rated, PG-rated, and G-rated films. The Japanese do anything they want in animation, and some great things come out."

Beck indicated that New World's botched release of animation auteur Hayas Miyazaki's NAUSICCA helped, in an indirect way, for Streamline to pick up Miyazaki's next feature, LAPUTA. "The Japanese are proud of these films," said Beck. "New World stripped NAUSICCA down to 88 minutes. They put on a new soundtrack. They cut out all the violence and anything that made it adult. Then they ended up not distributing it—it went out on tape, and that was it. The Japanese felt betrayed. So they went out and dubbed LAPUTA themselves—they hired people here to dub it very carefully, and tried to sell it to the studios."

When one of the major studios expressed an interest, Streamline was able to make a deal.

AKIRA has also been dubbed by its Japanese producers. LENSMAN, an adaptation of the famous space opera novels by E.E. "Doc" Smith had been dubbed by a previous distributor, who also replaced the film's music and sound effects. Streamline plans to retain the dubbing but restore the original Japanese music and effects.

Dubbing aside, the biggest obstacle to success for Japanese animation in this country remains the prejudice many audiences have against Japan's product, and its characteristic big-eyed look.

"I think Japanese animation compares quite favorably if you're looking at the right things," said Beck. "A lot of films like AKIRA and LAPUTA are the vision of individual artists who are the auteurs of their films. What's great about Japanese animation is they have a freedom we don't have."

Beck hopes that increased visibility will help erode Western prejudice. AKIRA has already been released in English as a graphic novel, and LENSMAN will be a comic book in the Spring. The film version of the latter, directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri, features dazzling computer animated special effects.

"Fifteen years ago, there was a stigma against Japanese animation, against the big-eyed look," said Beck. "But the younger fans today accept it." □

MOONTRAP Launching a space saga from Detroit

By Sue Uram

MOONTRAP was filmed over a three-month period in 1988 on a budget of \$3.6 million, using two warehouses set up in Troy, Michigan and the talents of some 200 film professionals, mostly from the Detroit area. The dream project of TV commercials producer Robert Dyke, the film was financed by limited partnerships sold to private investors, including the film's own executive producers Brian C. Manoogian and James A. Courtney, the latter a local real estate magnate. The balance of the financing came from Hollywood independent producer/distributor Shapiro Glickenhau Entertainment, which presold the film in foreign markets and released it domestically on videotape last Fall, scrapping a planned theatrical release.

Dyke expressed disappointment in SGE's decision to bypass movie theatres and move the film straight into the video marketplace, but was pleased with the push the film was given. Dyke, who co-wrote the film with friend Tex Ragsdale and made it his directing debut, said he thought more people would have the opportunity to see MOONTRAP on video than would have seen it during SGE's aborted regional theatrical playdates.

The Kaaliun ship, motion control model work by Jake Jacobson and David Hettmer, optical by Ed Wollman.



Dyke is the co-founder of Magic Lantern Productions, Inc., based in Farmington Hills, Michigan, where he specialized in producing TV commercial parodies of classic films like ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, both for Highland Appliances. The son of a Ford automotive engineer, the 44 year-old Dyke dabbled in 8mm home movies while a teenager in Dearborn, Michigan, making films with his buddy Bill Dear.

Dyke's first foray into professional movie-making ended in disaster. In 1983 Dyke worked on TIMERIDER, Dear's directing debut about a motorcycle-riding time traveler who winds up in the old West. Starring Fred Ward, with voiceovers by an uncredited Nick Nolte and music by Mike Nesmith, Dyke said he and Dear nevertheless lost their shirts in making the film. After TIMERIDER failed, Dyke went to work in an appliance store and Dear found a job at the Fischer Theatre in Detroit. Dear went on to write and direct HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS for Steven Spielberg, and Dyke contributed to that film's special effects.

Growing up in the '50s, science fiction became a passion with Dyke. "The first novel I ever read was *Song of the Stars* by W.J. Stewart. After that, I was hooked!" said Dyke, a big fan of film producer George Pal. "Pal did movies like he really believed in them. That gave his films a sense of reality and believability."

To give MOONTRAP a big screen quality on a low budget, Dyke called upon many of the Michigan filmmakers he had worked with on his TV commercials. The film's production designer, B.K. "Robert" Taylor, was recruited by Dyke at a local comic book convention where Taylor was appearing as a guest. Taylor, who has worked as an art director for Jim Henson on SESAME STREET, said he tried to give a '50s feel to the film's design.

Michigan art directors Peter Gurski and Larry Fox transformed Taylor's concepts into working sets on a miniscule budget. Their moon vista was built as a large forced perspective miniature, fully taking up one of the production's two warehouse shooting stages. Slanted on an angle, the set rose from floor level to 8'6" in height, stretching 100' in length.



Built on a plywood deck with 2'x4' supports, the set was sprayed with urethane insulating foam and covered with Portland cement to give it that dusty texture. "You have to be flexible," said Gurski of the low-budget filming. "The material you want may not be available, or something else might be more pleasing to the eye."

Taylor's robot design, dubbed the Kaaliun, was realized as a 12' full scale working prop by Acme Special Effects, headed by Gary Jones, another Michigan movie fan who once dabbled in 8mm films. Acme, also headed up by David Wogh, built the Kaaliun out of fiberglass with hard rubber legs and a framework of PVC and wood. Designed to be a stationary, the Kaaliun was placed on a rolling cart or teeter totter to convey the illusion of motion, and articulated with cables by up to seven off-camera operators.

Dyke turned to the Special Effects Center in Livonia, Michigan, an umbrella production base for a pool of talented optical and visual effects specialists.

Richard "Jake" Jacobson of Entertainment Engineering provided the film with motion-control spaceships, using a 7-axis unit he designed and built from parts ordered by catalogue while studying mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan.

"As an engineer, I worked in rooms with no windows, heavily involved with computers, and technical machinery," said Jacobson, whose motion-control work has appeared in HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS and EVIL DEAD 2. "So, I decided to run off and get into the movies. Now, I work in buildings with no windows, heavily involved with computers and technical machinery! But now there's an artistic aspect to it. I get to make aesthetic judgments."

Jacobson worked on MOONTRAP's impressive visual effects with Dave Hettmer of Phantasy Visual Effects, who provided the motion-control programming. MOONTRAP's optical effects "on a budget" were produced by using in-camera composites rather than blue screen, a more

An Acme effects technician readies a one-sixth scale set of Mera's temple for radio-controlled lunar rover scenes, manned by modified G.I. Joe figurines.



ALIEN rip-off boasts good production values

MOONTRAP

A Shapiro Glickenhaus Entertainment production. 9/89, 95 mins. In color. Director & producer, Robert Dyke. Executive producers, James A. Courtney, Brian C. Manoogian & Alan M. Solomon. Executive in charge of production, Frank K. Isaac. Director of photography, Peter Klein. Production designer, B. K. Taylor. Music, Joseph Lo Duca. Screenplay by Tex Ragsdale.

Jason Grant Walter Koenig
Mera Leigh Lombardi
Marty Tanner Bruce Campbell

by J. D. Macdonald

If ever there was a movie of which it could be said, "If you've seen one, you've seen them all," MOONTRAP is it. In the first 20 seconds following the main titles, we get references to the opening music from 2001, the opening shot from STAR WARS, and the opening narration from STAR TREK. It's just too bad that our hero Colonel Jason "Einstein" Grant (Walter Koenig) never saw ALIEN, because if he had he would have known that guys in space suits shouldn't mess around with organic-looking pods they find in derelict spaceship.

Jason and his co-pilot Ray "The Penetrator" Danner are a couple of over-the-hill jet jockeys flying the space shuttle Camelot on a satellite repair mission when they discover an alien spaceship. Somehow ground stations didn't notice a quarter-mile long object heading for Earth. On investigating, they unleash a robot-killing machine which later creates havoc on Earth and leads them to seek its origin on the moon. There the explorers discover a prehistoric moonbase, apparently built by



The Kaaliun robot, blasting NASA on Earth, a full-sized mechanical prop built by Acme Effects of Mt. Clemens, Michigan, enhanced by Ed Wollman's optical effects.

humans 14,000 years ago. The base is littered with human skeletons, miraculously still articulated, and Mera (Leigh Lombardi), a beautiful young lady in suspended animation who gets to be menaced, to scream, and to take off her shirt.

Our heroes survive an attack by another killer robot by blowing it to pieces with their guns, which apparently don't have any recoil. With their LEM stolen, and facing continued attacks, "Einstein" Grant knows what to do: he pops open a moon-tent and screws the girl.

Mera and Jason get captured and taken aboard the robots' ship, heading to Earth. Grant discovers that their missing LEM has been incorporated into the alien ship. "It's the lander," Grant says, for the benefit of members of the audience who have their eyes closed, "the last piece of gear needed to complete the ship—and they waited 14,000 years for us to bring it." Good thing for the robots that NASA used that particular design, or the wait might have been for nothing.

Grant sets the Self Destruct on the LEM—a surprise NASA refinement—and makes his getaway. He fires a burst from his weapon, and this time it has recoil. The new-found recoil blows him and Mera right out of a conveniently located opening in the hull and onto the space shuttle Intrepid, which, happily, is nearby. The Law of Incredible Coincidences has triumphed.

But there's still time for one more cliché before the final credits roll: one of the robots has made it to Earth, opening up the possibility of a sequel, or maybe even a TV series, overly optimistic wishful thinking on the part of the filmmakers.

Despite all of this, the film's effects and sets are very nice. And Walter Koenig has screen presence, especially without his ridiculous STAR TREK accent, though science fiction action/adventure may not be his best milieu. □



Astronauts Walter Koenig and Bruce Campbell (r), with moon maid Leigh Lombardi, fool around between takes. Above: Exploring the moon crypt.

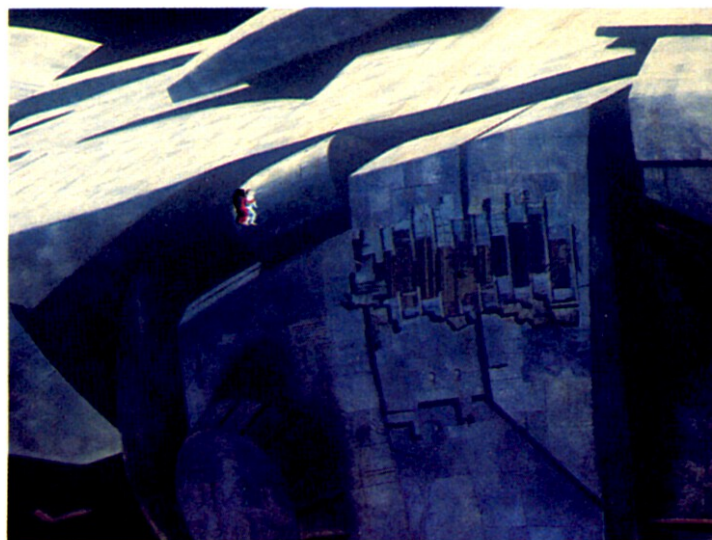
difficult but less expensive technique. "A typical shot involves 200 decisions—on the level of one to 10—such as where to set a miniature or matte painting in relation to the other images in the frame," explained Jacobson. "Any mistake means that you start over again."

Ed Wollman's Elegant Motion Optical Effects company provided MOONTRAP with its low-budget optical effects, including 14 matte shots, paintings by Bob Kayganich, and 140 cuts involving animation roscoping of laser beams. Wollman said Dyke had a specific kind of soft-edged laser effect in mind which made the work time consuming. "The basic problem is that everyone wants a nice, fuzzy edge with a very hot core," said Wollman. To get that effect, Wollman shot the laser artwork through a fog filter, exposing it with a blue gel, and combined it with an exposure of the hard-edged artwork as the white hot inner core.

Dyke "tightened up" some of the film's extensive lunar effects prior to release, scenes shot in miniature by Acme Effects. These included a three and one half minute sequence of the lunar rover, affectionately referred to as "Barbie and Ken on the Moon." Many shots of the astronauts walking on the moon were also cut for the sake of speeding up the pace of the movie.

British fans will note that the love scene between Walter Koenig and Leigh Lombardi in the moon tent has been edited out of their home video copies. Only U.S. viewers get the chance to see Koenig and a semi-nude 14,000 year-old woman show what can be accomplished in zero gravity. □

Astronauts approach the derelict Kaaliun ship, puppet miniatures and glass painting shot by Jacobsen and Hettmer at the Special Effects Center in Livonia, Michigan.



Puppet variation on standard slasher formula

PUPPET MASTER

A Paramount Video release of a Full Moon Productions film. 10/89, 90 mins. In color. Director, David Schmoeller. Producer, Hope Perello. Executive producer, Charles Band. Director of photography, Sergio Salvati. Editor, Tom Meshelski. Production designer, John Myhre. Special effects, David Allen Productions. Visual effects supervisor, David Allen. Music, Richard Band. Screenplay by Joseph G. Collodi, based on a story by Charles Band & Kenneth J. Hall.

Alex Whitaker	.....	Paul Le Mat
Dana Hadley	.....	Irene Miracle
Frank Forester	.....	Matt Roe
Carissa Stamford	.....	Kathryn O'Reilly
Theresa	.....	Merrya Small
Neil Gallagher	.....	Jimmie F. Skaggs
Megan Gallagher	.....	Robin Frates
Andre Toulon	.....	William Hickey

by David Wilt

PUPPET MASTER is a slight, rather perfunctory film which is all the more disappointing because there are indications that it could have been developed into an interesting, adult work of supernatural horror. Instead, the filmmakers present a variation on the standard slasher genre, with gimmicky multiple murders and the by now mandatory "twist" ending.

In 1939, puppet master Andre Toulon commits suicide in the Bodega Bay Hotel, but first hides a trunkful of living puppets in a secret wall compartment. Fifty years later, a disparate group of psychics searching for Toulon's secret is summoned to the hotel by an associate, Neil Gallagher. When they arrive, they learn Gallagher is dead. While trying to unravel the mystery, three of the four psychics are murdered by Toulon's living puppets, but in the end the animated dolls turn on the resurrected Gallagher and destroy him.

There are numerous loose ends and inconsistencies in PUPPET MASTER's plot, and its gimmick of animated puppets is just that—a blatant gimmick. Unlike the recent CHILD'S PLAY, PUPPET MASTER fails to advance either the technological presentation or the overall concept of living puppets, a common genre theme

since 1933's DEVIL DOLL.

Of the three means of "animating" the puppets—stop-motion animation, puppetry, and fluid subjective camera shots—the most effective, dramatically, is the Steadicam work, intercut with shadows and brief glimpses of the puppets. When the dolls are given personal traits or actions, their illusion of "life" is greatly enhanced, but these moments are all too scarce.

The film begins on a promising note, director David Schmoeller setting up the situation and characters with some suspense and humor. But once the "action" begins, characters who were carefully introduced are callously dispatched as the film rushes to its muddled conclusion.

Paul Le Mat, the only "name" in the cast, despite receiving the hero's role by default, has relatively little to do. Far better are Irene Miracle, as the feisty, South-



Blade, one of the malevolent puppets come to life, designed by Dennis Gordon.

PUPPET MASTER Puppet tricks by David Allen Productions

By Dennis Fischer

The ambitious low-budget effects of PUPPET MASTER are the work of David Allen Productions, supervised by Allen. Mark Rappaport served as chief mechanical engineer and puppeteer. Allen was brought onto the production by executive producer Charles Band, whom he served similarly on Stuart Gordon's THE DOLLS, as director David

Jester, the puppet ringleader.



Schmoeller was finishing the script. The puppets were designed by Dennis Gordon, based on ideas from Band and Schmoeller.

According to Allen, the puppets were originally armatured to be manipulated by rods and used with blue screen, as in the Oscar-nominated work Allen supervised for YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES, but that proved too expensive for the budget. Most of the film's puppet shots were achieved using live-action. Said Rappaport, "We'd get together and have rods and do RC [radio-control], and just mechanize it the best we could with cables or something that didn't break the budget but at the same time looked very realistic. The camera people did a nice job—they hid us when they could and when they couldn't hide us, we just got out of the way the best we could."

The most innovative shots in the film are Allen's stop-motion cuts using his new triple exposure method. "It kind of softens the jerkiness of the animation," said Allen. "I did that with THE DOLLS, but I did it manually. I now have an electronics box that was designed by Marty Breneis that runs the camera in



Making up Irene Miracle as one of the slain psychics, "Tunneller" puppet at left.

sequences."

The new device automatically divides the proper exposure into thirds, shooting three exposures for each frame. Allen manually moves the puppet between exposures, which blurs the frame to eliminate strobing for heightened realism. The device automatically reverses the film frame for multiple exposures and advances to the next frame, with a heads-up display that permits the animator to easily keep track of the process. Allen said the new technique is relatively inexpensive compared to ILM's computerized "go-motion" process which moves a puppet with rods during

each frame exposure, but added that he preferred using live-action techniques whenever possible.

Five puppet designs were built, about 13 inches high. Pinhead features a small head and big hands, and strangles people. Blade features a series of lethal attachments like knives, a poker, and a hook. Jester is the non-violent ringleader of the puppets who spins and changes expression. Leech Woman shoots leeches out of her mouth. And Tunneller has a spinning drill as a cap on his head which burrows through his victim.

The effects were accomplished on a budget of \$100,000. Rappo-

RECORDINGS

by Noah Andre Trudeau

Scoring Sequels, Composers Who Can Top Themselves

ern-accented fortune-teller, and Kathryn O'Reilly and Matt Roe, whose psychic adventures are inextricably bound up with their sex lives. But these characters are pointlessly and abruptly killed off, with as little concern and reason as in any low-grade slasher film. The "plot" is resolved with a few hasty seconds of conversation, and the graphic blood-and-slime climax seems aimed at the type of viewer who anxiously awaits each new FRIDAY THE 13TH sequel.

It's not surprising to see that Schmoeller took a pseudonym for his script. His choice of Colodi as a *nom de plume*, however, is an insult to the creator of *Pinocchio*. Though Schmoeller's script bears the lion's share of the blame for the film's failings, there is also little of distinction in the direction, production design or special effects (although Sergio Salvati's photography is at times effective). The film wastes the germ of a good idea (or, more accurately, a good situation) and several sharp performances, and winds up as just another mediocre horror entry. □

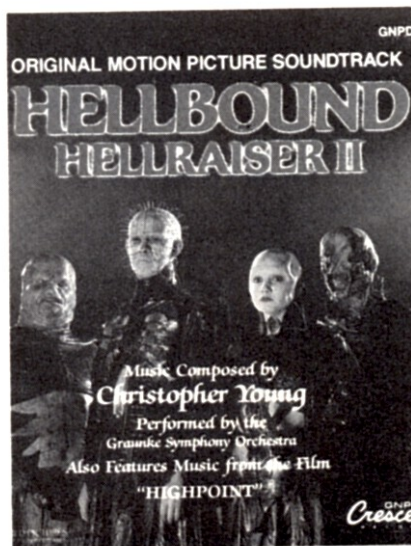
port credited Schmoeller with making the low-budget work go smoothly. "There were times when we would be working late at night, trying to squeeze shots in and not pay everybody double overtime," said Rappaport. "It made the grips tense because they didn't know how late they were going to work. It might be two or three in the morning. They were concerned because it takes forever to set the puppet shots up, and we were stressed out, too, because we're trying to get the movement to look good. Schmoeller was able to work through that and keep us working together when things got tight. He kept things moving along."

An unusual but effective approach was taken in creating mattes of the film's central hotel setting. Rather than a traditional matte painting, Dennis Gordon prepared an elaborately detailed miniature. "It was originally done as a model so that we could shoot it as a hanging miniature," said Allen. "But there were problems with money and schedule which made that impractical."

Another technical problem was blending puppets that were simultaneously controlled by rods, cables, and radio-controlled servomotors. Rappaport credited his crew, including Brett White and John Testis, for pulling it off, with Sally Chow coordinating. □

Hollywood did not invent the sequel—it just made it a fact of summer life. The history of music has several examples of composers who tried—with varying success—to repeat a hit. Felix Mendelssohn was just 17 when he wrote his very popular overture "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Seventeen years later, he returned to the work and used its themes and textures to fashion 12 new pieces. In this case, the magic was retained. Hector Berlioz demonstrated that a successful first composition does not guarantee equal results for its sequel. His 1830 "Symphonie fantastique" helped launch the programmatic symphony. It also established many of the schemes used later by film composers—most notably his use of a motif representing one character (Berlioz called it the *idée fixe*), which is altered and transformed throughout the musical story. Berlioz tried to match the power of the original with an 1832 follow-up "Lelio." Despite the presence of the hit "tune," this time the magic wasn't there.

John Williams has probably seconded and thirdded himself more than any film music composer. His tremendously powerful score for JAWS was followed by an almost-as-effective, but curiously underappreciated JAWS 2 score. There was also the STAR WARS trilogy—a cinematic and cine-music answer to Wagner's "Ring" cycle. William's newest triple-play was completed last summer with the release of INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (Warner Brothers 9 25883-2, playing time 59:00). Episode one, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, though an overt homage to Hollywood's "Golden Age" and rather baldly self-derivative of William's STAR WARS music, nevertheless succeeded through sheer panache and wealth of orchestral color. Episode two, INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, clogged with pseudo-orientalisms, tepid choral writing, and bland orchestrations, misfired badly. The final episode also falls short of the mark. The score is marred (once again) by blatantly obvious self-quotation and Williams founders, as he always does, when faced with



Christopher Young's score for the second Clive Barker horrorfest actually tops the original, now available on CD from Crescendo Records.

writing any music of profound expression. The action sequences are still executed with bravura and an attempt to add warmth to the Indiana Jones sound partially succeeds. But the end result is a disappointing coda to this trilogy rather than a powerful finale.

Williams is not the only composer to have to top himself this season. One of the few highlights of 1979's STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE was Jerry Goldsmith's refreshingly original score. It took four sequels to get Goldsmith back, for STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER (CBS Epic EK 45267, playing time 42:25). One measure of what has changed is Goldsmith's use of Alexander Courage's banal "Star Trek Theme." It was quoted briefly in the first movie, omitted entirely from the soundtrack recording, but appears in one-third of the cues for STAR TREK V. Goldsmith also revisits his own "Star Trek Theme" (now doubling as the main title for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION,) as well as the exciting Klingon motif he introduced in the first film. Goldsmith is too good a composer to revisit without rethinking and the familiar elements are given new and generally interesting treatments in his sequel score. Yet, perhaps because the visual/dramatic aspects of the film are so muted, the music is also more low-key and less expressive. Not top-

drawer Goldsmith.

Christopher Young, one of the most significant film music composers to emerge in the '80s, does manage to do himself one better. His music for 1987's HELLRAISER was strong, inventive, and exquisitely scored. Young was tapped for the follow-up, HELLBOUND: HELLRAISER II (GNP Crescendo GNP 8015, playing time 73:57—but only 13 of 20 cues are devoted to this score), and once again demonstrates his rich command of the orchestral palette. Even though the dynamics are, at times, overwhelming, Young never loses grasp of minute detail; the loudest and seemingly most chaotic passages maintain an amazingly transparent texture. This is what great genre film scoring is all about.

Young also wins high points for his sequel soundtrack to Howard Shore's horrific musical masterpiece for THE FLY. Young's THE FLY II (Varese Sarabande VSD-5220, playing time 47:21) avoids the transcendent tragedy of Shore's essay in favor of an entirely fresh score that is at once more impressionistic and humanized. It's further evidence of Young's prodigious talent.

The remaining sequels of the season may be briefly noted. Alan Howarth, who assisted director/composer John Carpenter on the three previous HALLOWEEN scores, took a solo role for HALLOWEEN 4 (Varese Sarabande VSD 5205, playing time 37:55). The result, while musically more "intelligent," lacks the chilling power of Carpenter's primitivistic, unsophisticated treatments. Michael Kamen was chosen for James Bond No. 16, LICENCE TO KILL (MCA MCAD-6307, playing time 45:36), and appears to have been overwhelmed by the assignment. Utterly routine is the nicest thing I can say about this bland, unimaginative traversal of the Bondian musical landscape. Finally, the grand mix of solid rock with original film music (by Elmer Bernstein) that made the soundtrack to GHOSTBUSTERS so enjoyable, is completely missing from GHOSTBUSTERS II (MCA MCAD-6306, playing time 44:55). You'd better call . . . discbusters.

Elm Street clone provides for an impressive directing debut

BEYOND DREAM'S DOOR

A Panorama Entertainment video release. 8/89, 86 mins. Director, Jay Woelfel. Producer, Dyrk Ashton. Associate producers, Susan Resatka & Scott Spears. Director of photography, Scott Spears. Editor, Susan Resatka. Special effects supervisor, Scott Simonson. Screenplay by Jay Woelfel.

Ben Dobbs Nick Baldasare
Eric Baxter Rick Kesler
Julie Oxel Susan Pinsky
Professor Noxx Norm Singer

by John Thonen

Since Wes Craven's *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* the "Is it a dream, or is it real" horror sub-genre has been in serious danger of being cloned into oblivion. To take this already hackneyed storyline and do something imaginative and frightening is no small feat. For a first time director to accomplish this on a threadbare budget, with what was apparently at best a semi-pro cast and crew is genuinely impressive. And that's what this low-budget, direct-to-video release is: impressive.

Novice director Woelfel's story concerns a young college student who is suffering from a series of bizarre nightmares, each continuing from where the last ended. He has kept a journal of these dreams and gives it to his university psychology professor. In the first of a series of simple, but particularly eerie moments in the film, the pro-

Ten year-old dream subject Lucas Simpson, makeup by Scott Simonson.



fessor finds himself experiencing the very images he is reading about in the journal. Attempts to research the phenomena unleash a creature from the dream world which periodically drops into our world to kill those who are aware of its existence.

Woelfel manages to skillfully deliver chills from some decidedly unthreatening images. A young child wanting to play hide-and-seek, paper airplanes wafting from out of the darkness, lights turning off in succession down a long corridor, a red balloon floating just out of reach. These are just a few of Woelfel's unconventionally brooding and atmospheric images.

While Woelfel is particularly adept at these seemingly mundane shocks he has not forgotten that the '80s audience likes things a bit more visceral. The film also offers several gory decapitations, a half-eaten face and the decidedly unfriendly denizen of the dream world who executes most of the previous mayhem. These moments are well handled by effects man Scott Simonson. The discovery of the headless body of a young girl is particularly nasty, even though such scenes are virtually a cliché in modern horror films. Much of the effectiveness of this, and other scenes, is that Woelfel never forgets that his characters are human, and he never lets us forget it as well.

To be sure, the film is not without its flaws. Some of the direction is a bit by the numbers and a few of Woelfel's dream images are a little shopworn. Also, the convoluted storyline is sometimes incomprehensible, though this is not totally undesirable in light of the film's nightmare motif. Simonson's dream beast is largely depicted through glimpses of its hands and arms. When viewed more completely, later in the film, its budgetary limitations are evident. The film is also occasionally technically crude. The 16mm blowup is evident in some grainy scenes and its lighting and sound are uneven at times. Still, this is almost certainly the most auspicious ultra low-budget debut since Sam Raimi's *THE EVIL DEAD*. One can only hope that Woelfel gets further opportunities to display his talent. □



Usually lovely and semi-nude, model Darby Vasbinder's brief dream sequence look.

BEYOND DREAM'S DOOR Shooting low-budget horror in Ohio

By John Thonen

Jay Woelfel, the 26 year-old Columbus, Ohio director of *BEYOND DREAM'S DOOR* patterned his first feature after a 20 minute short film of the same title, developed from an earlier five minute video called *AT THE DOOR OF DARKNESS*, two of his student projects from film school. Woelfel's family put up part of the money to get the feature rolling. Fellow student Dirk Ashton, who had worked on the original short, served as producer, and raised the rest of the money needed from supporters of Woelfel's student films.

Both Woelfel and Ashton are fans of horror, so their selection of the genre for their first feature was not a purely commercial one. "I tried to offer a mix of subtle atmosphere like you'd find in the classics along with graphic '80s style gore," said Woelfel. "If I give them the severed heads, I can also slip in the literary allusions and mood and atmosphere, something for everyone."

After assembling a cast and crew heavily comprised of university students, including the short's two lead actors in reversed roles, the intrepid duo began production on April 1, 1988. "Rather apropos," laughed Ashton. The film's extensive special effects were handled by another student, Scott Simonson. The filming continued, irregularly, from April until early July. Ashton recalled that "... anyone with any major part in the production had to pretty well put their private life on hold for the duration of the shoot.

"Every film production has its share of horror stories," said Ashton, "and we're certainly no exception. We had planned an easy schedule for our first day's shooting. Then we found out that our lead actor had thrown out his back two days before. The poor guy could barely move. We had to do some juggling to shoot around his physical limitations. There are some exterior shots where the audience may wonder why he's just walking fast instead of running. He was doing good to walk!"

When footage was fogged by a camera light leak, scenes had to be reshot, but Ashton and Woelfel can laugh about the near disaster. "The actors had gone on to other things," recalled Ashton. "One of them had a stage role in a production of *Annie*. He was Daddy Warbucks and he had actually shaved his head for the

Panorama Entertainment's original campaign pushed the horror angle.



VIDEOPHILE

by Bill Kelley

British Horror on Video, Restoring Missing Footage

part. Luckily, when we heard what he was going to do we had asked him to save the hair, just in case. To do the reshoots, we actually glued the hair back onto his head in a kind of makeshift wig. It only covered the front of his head so we had to film him always walking toward the camera. I've never had anyone ask about the way his hair looks, but I can't watch the scene without laughing."

Ashton and Woelfel were surprised when potential distributors for the film started calling shortly after production started. "Apparently these guys watch *Variety's* new film starts column and jump at every one that doesn't list a distributor," said Ashton. The pair settled on Panorama Entertainment, which insisted on some reshooting. "What they wanted was basically more exploitation material," said Ashton. "More monster footage, slimmer monster footage, and footage featuring nude females, and they got it."

Effects man Simonson broke out the KY Jelly and Karo Syrup to slime up his cable controlled monster arms and rod controlled puppet. Meanwhile, Ashton auditioned over a dozen candidates from a local modeling agency to handle the newly written nude scenes. "A producer's life can be hell," laughed Ashton.

Panorama took the film to Milan's MIFED film market to make foreign sales and has released the title on home video domestically. And Ashton and Woelfel have several projects under consideration at Panorama and hope to start a new production soon. "I know we can do it," said Woelfel, somewhat frustrated at waiting. "We've proven that. I just want someone to give us the chance to do it again." □

When the horror market went soft, Panorama sold the Vasbinder footage.

Since the late 1950s, when the first wave of Hammer horrors demonstrated the popularity of British genre films outside their homeland, American distributors have been importing them . . . and systematically deleting the very things that made them superior to their American counterparts.

HORROR OF DRACULA (1958) is missing a midway-through-disintegration close-up of Christopher Lee's face, and American prints of **CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1957) substitute an extra shot of an appalled Robert Urquhart in place of Peter Cushing lowering a corpse's head into his laboratory acid-bath. These sins are repeated in the Warner Home Video versions of both films (although some fans report seeing the missing few seconds of **HORROR OF DRACULA** on Canadian TV).

But how many fans know that **TERROR OF THE TONGS** (1961), one of the more sadistic early Hammers, had *never* been shown intact in this country, until Cinemax cable premiered it last December? Former syndication-TV prints lopped a full *nine* minutes from the film's 79-minute running time! Or that American International, after picking up Hammer's **THE TWO FACES OF DR. JEKYLL** for U.S. double-feature release (retitling its first **JEKYLLS INFERNO** and finally the typically—for AIP—misleading **HOUSE OF FRIGHT**), had the original Hammer cast re-dub their lines, so that American teenagers would hear "hades," "heck," and "darn" in place of "hell" and "damn?" (AIP also abbreviated any scene in the film offering the slightest suggestion of sex and violence, with a series of jarring wipes, dissolves, and other distracting opticals—which at least make it easy to tell where the censoring was done).

Though both **TERROR OF THE TONGS** and **THE TWO FACES OF DR. JEKYLL** are unavailable on tape in this country, home video has begun to correct some of the damage perpetrated during the original U.S. importing of British horror films. VidAmerica tapes of the 1971 Hammer double-bill, **TWINS OF EVIL** and **HANDS OF THE RIPPER** (marked down to \$19.95



Satan with consort Linda Hayden, now more fully on view in the uncut **BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW** (1970), released last year by Cannon.

each last year), restored several seconds of sex, nudity, and gore (notably Peter Cushing's beheading of one of the Collinson twins) that were snipped out by Universal to assure an R rating.

Two years ago, *Variety* published a two-paragraph announcement that an independent company planned to acquire *all* rights to the entire run of Hammer Film Productions. The logistics involved in rounding up those rights might account for the fact that nothing has yet come of the plan. But anyone interested in pursuing such a potentially lucrative marketing scheme should be enlightened as quickly as possible to the goldmine to be found in going back to the source negatives, and issuing the Hammer horrors to American video buffs in their *complete* versions.

While we await this Hammer restoration, and the first appearance of such other, inexplicably missing British '60s shockers as **JACK THE RIPPER** (with its Jimmy Sangster script), a few restored British horror films intermittently appear on video, released without fanfare.

The most recent of these is a film that has long dangled beyond the grasp of American moviegoers—the British theatrical version of **THE BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW** (U.K. title: **SATAN'S SKIN**). It's a witchhunting melodrama set in medieval, rural Brit-

ain, made by Tigon, the producers of Michael Reeves' legendary **WITCHFINDER GENERAL** (U.S. title: **THE CONQUEROR WORM**), unabashedly designed to duplicate the mood (and profits) of that classic film. The pre-Golan/Globus incarnation of Cannon Films gave **BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW** a perfunctory release in 1970, and while it sported an R rating, its 93-minute British running time was pared to 89 minutes. A darkened (to obscure nudity and gore) and even further censored print was syndicated on pre-cable American TV.

In 1985, Las Vegas-based Paragon Video released Cannon's 89-minute theatrical version. This at least restored the excised footage (nudity of Linda Hayden, a climactic orgy, and the clinically gruesome removal of a patch of hairy "devil's skin" from a witch), but several minutes could still be found only in the British theatrical print. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the film has always seemed slightly choppy, since it was planned as an anthology, an approach abandoned after shooting began.

Early in 1989, Cannon Video acquired **THE BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW** from the defunct Paragon and re-issued the film in a handsome, eye-catching box—with a running time of 101 minutes printed on the cassette. In truth, Cannon's tape clocks in at 94 minutes—a full minute longer than the reported British running time—and restores two formerly missing (in the U.S.) scenes: Barry Andrews' discovery of an oozing patch of "devil's skin" on his leg (one of the more revolting images from early '70s British horror films), and the lengthy (if bloodless and fully clothed) interrogation of suspected witch Michele Dotrice—both missing from the Paragon tape.

Ironically, the ravages of time—and Eastman Color—have wreaked havoc on the film during the intervening years. While Cannon's source print is sharp and crisp, the movie's already muted color has faded almost to sepia. The abridged Paragon version however displays the attractive hues of the original release. □



FILM RATINGS

AFTER MIDNIGHT

Directed by Jim & Ken Wheat. MGM/UA, 11/89, 93 mins. With: Marg Helgenberger, Marc McClure, Alan Rosenberg, Jillian McWhirter.

The old "scary stories around the campfire" anthology gets an academic touch when nutty professor Ramy Zada tutors some college students at his home as part of his class on the "Psychology of Fear." Each student takes a turn telling the scariest story they know. Apparently, the really good stories must only be available on the graduate level, because these tales are strictly sophomoreic.

Stories include a haunted house surprise birthday party that Marc McClure takes a little too seriously, a rape-and-pillage nightmare experienced by four lost bimbos in a sports car, an all-night telephone operator (Marg Helgenberger in a leg cast) about to be blown away by a psycho, and the wraparound tale of the professor's class which turns ugly when a disgruntled student goes Jason. On a strictly pass-fail system, this directorial debut for scripters Jim and Ken Wheat almost flunks.

• • • • • Dann Gire

ALIEN NATION

Directed by Kenneth Johnson. Fox, 9/89, 2 hours. With: Gary Graham, Sean Six, Eric Pierpoint, Michele Scarabelli, Lauren Woodland.

The 2-hour pilot for this Fox network TV series is so superior to the James Caan/Mandy Patinkin theatrical film, it's hard to believe it's based on the same source material. The TV version relies on heavy-handed PLANET OF THE APES-type social satire and, with its large cast, seems like the first installment of a typical soap opera. But the characters are well drawn by producer/director Kenneth Johnson. There is a genuine sweetness in some of the personal relationships, particularly between Lauren Woodland and her alien cop father Eric Pierpoint. Gary Graham takes the Caan role. The cop show part of the series premise is a lot less interesting than the social life of the aliens, whose makeup has been excellently reproduced by Rick Stratton.

• • • • • Judith P. Harris

BACK TO THE FUTURE—PART 2

Directed by Robert Zemeckis. Universal, 11/89, 108 mins. With: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Thomas F. Wilson.

After the first half-hour's baby-toy colors and hi-tech

	●●●●	●●●	●●	●	○					
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR					
FILM TITLE	SB	VJB	FSC	DG	BK	GK	DS			
ALIEN NATION/Kenneth Johnson Fox TV, series, 30 mins.	●	●●	●		●	●				
ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN/Don Bluth MGM/UA, 11/89, 85 mins.	●●	●	●	●●	●	●●	●●●			
BACK TO THE FUTURE II/Robert Zemeckis Universal, 11/89, 130 mins.	●●●	●●	●	●●	●	●●	●●●			
BATMAN/Tim Burton Warner Bros, 6/89, 126 mins.	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●			
CARNIVAL OF SOULS/Herk Harvey Panorama, 10/89, 85 mins.	●	●●	●●●●		●●	●●●●	●●			
COMMUNION/Phillipe Mora New Line, 9/89, 109 mins.	●	●●	●	●	○	●●	●			
ERIK THE VIKING/Terry Jones Orion, 8/89, 103 mins.	●	●●	●	○	●●	●				
FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VIII/Rob Hedden Paramount, 7/89, 100 mins.	●	○	●	○	●	○	●			
GIRL IN A SWING/Gordon Hessler Millimeter, 11/89, 112 mins.	●●	●●	●●●	●	●●	●				
HALLOWEEN 5/Dominique Othenin-Girard Galaxy Int., 10/89, 96 mins.	●	○	○		●	●				
I, MADMAN/Tibor Takacs Transworld, 4/89, 89 mins.	●●	●●	●	●●	●	●●	●●			
INDIANA JONES & THE LAST CRUSADE/ Steven Spielberg, Paramount, 5/89, 127 mins.	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●			
LICENCE TO KILL/John Glen MGM/UA, 7/89, 89 mins.	●●	●●●	●	●●	●●	●●	●●●			
THE LITTLE MERMAID/Musker & Clements Buena Vista, 11/89, 82 mins.	●●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●			
LOOK WHO'S TALKING/Amy Heckerling Tri-Star, 10/89, 90 mins.	●●	●	●●		●	●				
MILLENIUM/Lewis Gilbert Fox, 8/89, 108 mins.	●●	●	●●	○	●	●●	●			
THE NAVIGATOR/Vincent Ward Circle Films, 5/89, 93 mins.	●●	●●	●●		●●	●●	●			
NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET V/ Stephen Hopkins, New Line, 8/89, 89 mins.	●	●●	●	○	●	●●	●●			
PETER PAN/Walt Disney Buena Vista, 7/89 (1952 re-issue), 76 mins.	●●●		●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●			
PHANTOM OF THE MALL/Richard Friedman Fries, 10/89, 88 mins.	●		○	○	○					
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA/Dwight H. Little 21st Century, 10/89, 90 mins.		●●		○	○		●●			
PRANCER/John Hancock Orion, 11/89, 103 mins.	●●●			●●	●●					
SECOND SIGHT/Joel Zwick Warner Bros, 11/89, 84 mins.		●	○		○	●				
SHOCKER/Wes Craven Universal, 10/89, 110 mins.	●●●	○	●●	●	●	●●●	●			
STEPPATHER II/Jeff Burr Millimeter, 11/89, 86 mins.	●	●●●	●●		●					
TALES FROM THE CRYPT/Richard Donner HBO, series, 30 mins.	●		●●		●		●●			

SB/Steve Biodrowski VJB/Vincent J. Bossone FSC/Frederick S. Clarke DG/Dann Gire
BK/Bill Kelley GK/Gary Kimber DS/Dan Scapperotti

jokiness, set in 2015's version of Marty McFly's Hill Valley, this sequel to 1985's BACK TO THE FUTURE delivers a curious spin on IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE's memorable vision of smalltown life turned helish. But the movie never quite recovers from its horror over middle-aged angst, and progressively mistakes clever freneticism for dramatic substance. But given the production's Spielbergian spit and polish, will anyone care? ILM's special effects are predictably

efficient, though they almost lose out to the ubiquitous product promos (all those sweaty feet waiting for take-charge Nikes!). Michael J. Fox is as energetically winsome as before, and Christopher Lloyd makes battiness almost endearing. But while Robert Zemeckis pushes all the right buttons with a well-oiled, post-ROG-ER RABBIT finger, the effect is of a TV sitcom writ large. The Wild West conclusion arrives next summer.

• • • Charles D. Leayman

there's a threat to the Earth or Moon," are four cheerfully incompetent civil service types aching to kick alien butt.

It turns out an extraterrestrial restaurant chain, Crumb's Crunchy Delights, has decided to harvest humans as the new intergalactic fast food, providing the opportunity for cartoony gore scenes. When the aliens realize they've been spotted, they throw off their human disguises, revealing forms reminiscent of a Terry Gilliam cartoon, with Hitchcockian chin wattles, bulging buttocks, and prominent belly buttons.

Though the film was reportedly made on a shoestring over a period of 4½ years, the end product is highly professional and enjoyable. Unlike most films with graphic violence, this is not mean spirited. Credit must go to Peter Jackson who produced, wrote, directed, co-edited, and created the great special effects makeup; additionally he plays two roles.

• • • Judith P. Harris

BLACK OUT

Directed by Doug Adams. Ambient Light Entertainment, 10/89, 91 mins. With: Carol Lynley, Gail O'Grady, Michael Keys Hall, Joseph Gian.

This film marks the return of co-producer and scripter Joseph Stefano (PSYCHO, THE OUTER LIMITS) but it's hard to think of a more inauspicious comeback. The tale concerns a sexually repressed young virgin (Gail O'Grady) who has blocked out the shocking memories of her family life and is lured to the old homestead for supposed thrills a la William Castle's STRAIGHT-JACKET. First-time director, Doug Adams gives us stilted performances, bad sound, dull suspense scenes and lots of dramatic non sequiturs. Maniac-in-the-house movies like this one are likely to impel their audience off the edge of their seats and out the door.

• • • Dennis Fischer

COMMUNION

Directed by Phillippe Mora. New Line Cinema, 9/89, 109 mins. With: Christopher Walken, Lindsay Crouse, Joel Carlson, Frances Sternhagen.

What distinguishes this from normal science fiction fare, not to say the headlines of the supermarket tabloids, is that writer-abductee Whitley Strieber is totally serious about being kidnapped and rectally violated by space aliens. He is by all appearances a rational and introspective man, not a backwoods bozo steeped in swamp gas or moonshine,



ALIEN NATION, Fox TV's extraterrestrial soap opera.

which lends his story a little more credence and latent creepiness than is usually accorded the average Elvis sighting.

To his credit, director Philippe Mora plays Strieber straight. There are two dramatic problems, though, neither of which has to do with the close-encounter-of-an-anal-kind conceit. First, the family triad—husband Whitley (Christopher Walken), wife Ann (Lindsay Crouse), and son Andrew (Joel Carlson)—is not for a minute convincing as a nuclear unit. Second, Walken kidnapped by aliens is redundant—his deerhunting, dead zoned persona is already beyond the bend. The spine of this tale is the abnormal intruding on the normal—which means the normal has to be persuasive for the abnormal to be scary. (By way of comparison, think of the family and visitation in *POLTERGEIST*.) Still, Mora and Strieber are worth a look and listen—though they may not wipe that smirk off your face.

● ● Thomas Doherty

CURSE II: THE BITE

Directed by Fred Goodwin. TWE (video), 10/89, 96 mins. With: Jill Schoelen, J. Eddie Peck, Jamie Farr.

Earnest but ludicrous Italian/Japanese co-production shot in New Mexico with U. S. actors. Should have been titled "Attack of the Killer Hand Puppet." J. Eddie Peck gets bitten by a mutant snake and his hand turns into a snake head, complete with eyes, fangs, and a snakey personality. His renegade hand kills a number of people in gross-out detail, but fails in its attempt to kill Peck's obnoxious girlfriend, Jill Schoelen. There is virtually no attempt to explain what's going on, and the climactic effects pull out all the stops in an attempt to send viewers with snake phobias into shock (but once again, any logic is jettisoned). Delivers the expected

thrills and suspense despite its lack of sense, and so provides some mindless entertainment. Overall production quality is good and the effects are adequate.

● ● David Wilt

COHEN AND TATE

Directed by Eric Red. New Galactic Films, 2/89, 86 mins. With: Roy Scheider, Adam Baldwin, Harley Cross.

Two mismatched hit men (Roy Scheider and Adam Baldwin) orphan and abduct a child (*THE BELIEVERS'* Harley Cross) who has information their employers want. Their all-night run to Houston turns to nightmare. It's another compressed, stylized situation thriller from the pen of Eric Red, feature-directing for the first time. Though more realistic in its premise than Red's *THE HITCHER* or *NEAR DARK*, Red's abstract instincts still rule in his stark visual treatment of the Texas freeway-scape and his handling of the characters. The motives and actions of Cross as the scared yet resourceful victim are pretty self-evident but Scheider's suicidal obsession with completing a "bad job," Baldwin's trigger happy yahoomism, and bad judgement on the part of law officers all amount to behavioral MacGuffins for the sake of Red's plot imagery.

● Michael Fenimore

ERIK THE VIKING

Directed by Terry Jones. Orion, 10/89, 104 mins. With: Tim Robbins, Mickey Rooney, Eartha Kitt, John Cleese, Terry Jones.

Is there more to life than raping and pillaging? It's a question that drives one sensitive marauder (Tim Robbins) to the ends of the cosmos in this entertaining, if uncertain fantasy. Gathering such Viking comrades as Sven the Berserk and Thorfinn the Skull Splitter, the dim-witted Erik braves an enormous sea serpent and a rather fruity magic isle to end the age of Ragnarok, and bring peace to the world. Seeking to retain his profit margin on

bloodshed, the warmongering Halfdann the Black (John Cleese) attempts to halt Erik's quest.

Unlike Terry Gilliam's similarly-themed, and far more lavish *ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHHAUSEN*, fellow Monty Pythonite-turned-director Terry Jones doesn't seem to know whether he's making a comedy or a straight adventure, stopping the story for zany gags that only work half the time. But when Erik flies off the world's edge to Asgard's icy environs, Jones terrifically realizes his story's mythic potential. There's always plenty to laugh at, particularly from Cleese's Halfdann, who devises terrible executions with the nonchalance of ordering out for Chinese.

● ● Daniel Schweiger

HALLOWEEN 5: THE REVENGE OF MICHAEL MYERS

Directed by Dominique Othenin-Girard. Galaxy International, 10/89, 96 mins. With: Donald Pleasence, Danielle Harris, Wendy Kaplan, Ellie Cornell.

Thanks to evocative lighting and several nightmarish, down-the-rabbit-hole moments, Dominique Othenin-Girard's latest contribution to the Michael Myers saga modestly outshines its murky immediate predecessor. But to what avail? The script teasingly promises an up-front recognition of female sexuality as the cause of Michael's murderous "rage" (remember Michael's sister?), but fails to explicitly link the beleaguered heroine's pre-pubescent age to *The Shape's* demand for pre-sexual "innocence." Despite felicitous touches (such as an attic full of surreal, *TEXAS CHAINSAW*-inspired mementos of family life), the film succumbs to that turgidity which results when narrative resolution never comes: the body count doesn't matter in a splatter soap opera without end. Even the unexplained (but-to-be-

continued) inclusion of a shadowy gunslinger out of Sergio Leone and King's *The Dark Tower* cannot redeem the project's wearying nastiness. And does Donald Pleasence really need the money this badly?

● ● Charles D. Leayman

THE LITTLE MERMAID

Directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. Buena Vista, 11/89, 82 mins. With: Jodi Benson, Pat Carroll, Samuel E. Wright, Kenneth Mars.

In returning to the fairy tales which formed the basis of their beloved animated classics, Disney looks to have a winner on its hand with this bright, bouncy, and delightful confection. It's a film adults can safely take their children to without fear of being bored or sweetened to death. In keeping with the sanitization of their other children's stories, Disney deletes important parts of the original Hans Christian Andersen fable, such as the knife-like pain the mermaid feels every time she walks. Perhaps to compensate, they have added a great villainess, a female octopus sea witch, voiced wonderfully by Pat Carroll.

The water animation effects are impressive, but the musical numbers are full of such quick MTV cuts that a lot of the clever, adorable, and funny characters are too briefly glimpsed. The music—especially two Jamaican numbers—is quite good. But "Part of Your World," the tune which sums up the plot—heard three times, is almost a note for note steal of composer Howard Ashman's own "Somewhere That's Green" from *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* and even expresses some of the same longings.

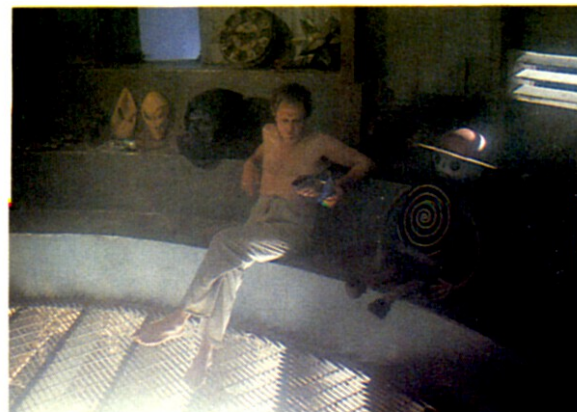
● ● ● Judith P. Harris

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Directed by Amy Heckerling. Tri-Star, 10/89, 90 mins. With: John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Olympia Dukakis, George Segal.

Critics missed the boat on this colossal boxoffice hit.

Christopher Walken in *COMMUNION*, at home on the Mothership.



MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH makeup by Dean Jones.

Variety sneered it "was destined for a short life in theatres." Instead, director Amy Heckerling's comic fantasy broke the \$100 million barrier to become one of the biggest moneymakers of last year.

What can you say? Babies are definitely hot at the boxoffice, though that didn't help Freddy much last summer in New Line's *THE DREAM CHILD*. But audiences responded to the sweetness of Heckerling's idea of giving voice to a baby's inner thoughts, including wonderfully imaginative sequences set in the womb with puppet effects by San Francisco's Magic Vista Studios, Inc.

● ● Frederick S. Clarke

MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

Directed by Larry Brand. Concorde, 9/89, 86 mins. With: Patrick Macnee, Clare Hoak, Adrian Paul.

This appallingly inept travesty—amateurish in every respect, from its shoddy matte work and in-camera special effects to its tacky props, sets and costumes—scarcely bears a shred of resemblance to the 1964 Roger Corman/Vincent Price classic of which it is nominally a remake. Patrick Macnee has what may be the briefest cameo ever for a top-billed star: as the "Red Death," he appears in the opening scene and then is doubled by a stand-in until the clumsy finale. The whole abomination more closely resembles one of Andy Milligan's notorious, homemade medieval gore movies of the '70s (e.g. *TORTURE DUNGEON*) than even the cheesiest Concorde or New World release. But there's no denying that



Robert Englund as **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**.

Corman had real nerve, if not sense, to keep his name on the credits as producer.

● Bill Kelley

ME AND HIM

Directed by Doris Dorrie. Columbia, 8/89, 90 mins. With: Griffin Dunne, Ellen Greene, Craig T. Nelson, Carey Lowell.

Alberto Moravia's clever spoof of a novel becomes a vulgar, vapid, one-joke sitcom under Doris Dorrie's heavy Germanic direction. "Him" is Griffin Dunne, a talented architect with revolutionary designs on New York. "Me" is his jovial genitalia which develops a will and an off-screen voice of its own. Urged on by his philandering phallus, Dunne puts his marriage to Ellen Greene at risk by bedding sundry women including new Bond girl Carey Lowell and the wife of his boss. Painful puns about erections compete for the bad taste award with the film's surprisingly misogynistic angle. Dorrie tries to put the manic macho events in perspective with the clumsiest of endings—all the leads sing "Everything is Going to Be All Right" as they dance on Manhattan sidewalks. A huge hit in Germany, where crassness was always big boxoffice, despite valiant acting by the two stars, the film is as limp as Him's appendage when called upon to stand and deliver.

● Alan Jones

MURDER STORY

Directed by Eddie Arno and Markus Innocenti. Contracts International/Elsevier-Vendex Films, 8/89, 90 mins. With: Christopher Lee, Bruce Boa, Alexis Desinof.

Remember **HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM** ('59), with Michael Gough as a homicidal author who bumps

people off so he can write about the crimes? Place a taciturn novelist on the *right* side of the law and you have a pretty good idea of the tone of this satisfying chiller, which features one of Christopher Lee's most charming, natural performances (as the outwardly sinister writer). It's also his most recent genre entry to reach the U.S. (the film was shot in Holland in 1988). The odd device of two directors prevents this ball-of-twine mystery from developing a singular style, but it compensates with some potent shocks (including some juicy killings), atmosphere to spare, and even a few echoes of **THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE**.

● Bill Kelley

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Directed by Dwight H. Little. 21st Century, 11/89, 95 mins. With: Robert Englund, Jill Schoelen, Alex Hyde-White, Stephanie Lawrence.

The race to cash-in on Andrew Lloyd Webber gets a so-so start as the music lover's dark enchantment is traded for a slasher film's crass violence. A Manhattan soprano (Jill Schoelen) gets sandbagged on the head, and is transported to her past incarnation as the Phantom's protegee.

Dwight Little (**HALLOWEEN IV**) at first does a capable job of recreating a classic Hammer ambiance of fog-shrouded caverns and eerie organ music, with Robert Englund contributing a menacing yet touching performance as his Faustian Phantom. But then Englund's flesh mask comes off, and Freddy's spirit emerges for pointless beheadings and impalements. A confusing modern denouement does little to help the film's tug-of-moods, but sets up the planned sequel, titled **THE PHANTOM OF NEW YORK**. Gaston Leroux's spirit can only hope that the next entry goes for the belle canto instead of the blood and guts.

● Daniel Schweiger

PIN

Directed by Sandor Stern. New World Video, 6/89, 102mins. With: David Hewlett, Cyndy Preston, John Ferguson, Terrance O'Quinn.

Based on an original and creepy novel by Andrew Neiderman, writer-director Sandor Stern creates a leisurely paced but fascinating work, which could become a cult favorite. The titular character (short for Pinocchio) is a life-sized anatomically correct dummy, used by doctor Terrance O'Quinn to explain medical details to patients and divert young children during examinations.

O'Quinn, so wonderfully schizo in **THE STEPFATHER** films, turns in another memorable performance. Lacking in warmth, his idea of spending quality time with his kids is to ask son David Hewlett to count back from 100 by 7s. When teenage daughter Cyndy Preston tells him she's pregnant, his only reaction is mild irritation that he has to spend Sunday at the office to give her an abortion.

When O'Quinn dies in a car crash, Hewlett begins to slip into paranoid schizophrenia, throwing his voice to provide a life for Pin (voice of Jonathan Banks). Hewlett dresses Pin in his father's clothes, provides him with a motorized wheelchair and eventually contrives to cover his exposed facial muscles with artificial skin and hair. Soon Pin is making life and death decisions for Hewlett and his sister.

Though Stern abandons a lot of the artful ambiguity of Neiderman's novel, his film ranks with the best of the creepy subgenre in which ventriloquist dummies may or may not have a life of their own. Hewlett and Preston match O'Quinn's histrionics in touching roles as the damaged kids.

● Judith P. Harris

SECOND SIGHT

Directed by Joel Zwick. Warner Bros, 11/89, 85 mins. With: John Larroquette, Bronson Pinchot, Stuart Pankin.

Larroquette, Pinchot, and Pankin in the sewer in **SECOND SIGHT**.



O'Quinn in **STEPFATHER II**, underbelly of the American Dream.

Odds are the wheels started spinning at Lorimar when executives perused the grosses over at Columbia for **GHOST-BUSTERS**. Mining the same vein in their search for gold in the spirit world, the writers came up with the Second Sight Detective Agency, which sleazy but lovable John Larroquette operates with misfit psychic Bronson Pinchot and his keeper, phenomena expert Stuart Pankin. This trio of actors, best known for their comedic endeavors on prime-time TV, evince little of the chemistry generated by their SNL/SCTV prototypes, Murray, Aykroyd, and Ramis. With their efforts undercut by a pedestrian script and flat sitcom-style film techniques, they're left adrift in this slight comedy. Bran Ferran's minimal and rudimentary visual effects fail to enliven the proceedings.

● Vincent J. Bossone

STEPFATHER 2: MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY

Directed by Jeff Burr. ITC Entertainment Group, 11/89, 92 mins. With: Terry O'Quinn, Meg Foster, Caroline Williams.

"Frankenstein was a monster... *You're* the kindest man I've ever met," reassures Meg Foster's character upon glimpsing the surgical chest scars of the new man in her life, Dr. Gene Clifford. Unfortunately, the good doctor is the former Jerry Blake, who has recently escaped an institute for the criminally insane which had served as home when his last attempt at familial bliss proved disappointing... just like all the other times. Along with his identity, Blake/Clifford leaves behind a high body count.

As the subtitle of this sequel to 1987's critically acclaimed sleeper suggests, the filmmakers have graced their storyline with frequent and effective doses of sardonic humor. But this deft examination of the underbelly of the American Dream is still downright chill-

ing. Thanks to Terry O'Quinn's shrewd performance, Jerry Blake is the most memorable and vivid screen psychopath since Norman Bates. Director Jeff Burr shows a marked improvement over his handling of 1987's **THE OFF-SPRING**.

● Vincent J. Bossone

WATCHERS

Directed by Jon Hess. Watchers Productions Ltd., 11/88, 92 mins. With: Corey Haim, Barbara Williams, Michael Ironside, Lala.

This is a deplorable desecration of Dan R. Koontz's wonderful bestseller. The novel's love story between Travis and Nora has been replaced with the homey dynamics of a kid (Corey Haim) and his mom (Barbara Williams) who find a golden retriever with humanlike intelligence, part of a government genetics experiment gone awry. The horrifying creature tracking the dog, also a result of the experimental mishap, and the seminal message of the story are altered in a crazy quest for a youth-oriented audience. Universal gave this Rose and Ruby Canadian tax shelter write-off the token release it deserved.

● Les Paul Robley

WITCHERY

Directed by Martin Newlin (aka Fabrizio Laurenti). Filmmirage/Vidmark Ent., 10/89, 96 mins. With: Linda Blair, David Hasselhoff, Hildegard Knief.

This unpleasant Italian production filmed in Massachusetts as **WITCHCRAFT**, spends far too much time setting up its shopworn premise: eight people trapped in a haunted resort hotel on a deserted island are menaced by a vindictive witch. Some of the "hell" scenes are relatively intense, with makeup effects by Maurizio Trani, and seem to have been inspired by **HELLRAISER**, but the rest of the film is distinguished by ugly photography and a generally low level of writing and acting. Not even worth the video rental fee.

● David Wilt

DESIGNING THE HANDMAIDS TALE

continued from page 23

or to George Orwell's distinctly postwar British flavor in 1984. Walsh, for instance, found himself inescapably impressed by the look of director Michael Anderson's 1956 adaptation of Orwell's famous dystopia.

"The problem with that movie, which I think was immaculately made, was that it was just too cold," said Walsh. "The only thing I emulated was exercising as much control as possible over the look of our society. In the end, though, we had to recognize that Anderson and Truffaut [in FAHRENHEIT 451] had their material—we had to deal with our own."

"I had no doubt," said Schlöndorff, "that in the future, the look of fascism, particularly if it took root in America, would be entirely different from that adopted by the Nazis or the Italians. The style of fascism would be determined by Madison Avenue, and it would be designed according to American taste, just as the look of Leni Riefenstahl's TRIUMPH OF THE WILL appealed to the Germans during the Nuremberg Rally."

If one thing at all was evident, said Schlöndorff, it was that any future that followed in the wake of environmental catastrophe was going to be cheap. "There are going to be scars to see," he said. "They are not going to be designing fancy cars after the whole deal collapses."

Walsh noted that he drew the markings of paranoia from a wide array of pictorial sources including—in the case of the nine-man hanging machine set in the courtyard of the Duke University cathedral, which served as the headquarters for the Gilead ruling elite—the Civil War photographs of Matthew Brady.

"For the hanging machine," he said, "we borrowed from Brady's photographs of the hanging of Lincoln's assassins. I thought this was a strong visual statement of who has the power and who does not."

The gallows, however, was probably the only device custom-designed for the film. Most everything else used was just, well, stuff. "We didn't want a designer's concoction," said Schlöndorff. "The look of the film had to connect to the story and reinforce a reality. In Gilead, people would be using things left over from the consumer society."

In Gilead, for instance, bar codes such as those found on supermarket goods are affixed to wrist bands worn by the handmaids. The consumer culture has given way to a surveillance culture, and close tabs are kept on the

populace through comprehensive computer databases. The large sedans driven by Gilead's ruling elite are all one model, painted a darker blue; their hubcaps replaced, windshields darkened, and their license plates marked with bar codes.

Otherwise, noted producer Daniel Wilson, signs were used extensively to indicate the degree to which things had gone, quite literally, to hell in a handbasket. Literacy has been stolen from most people, and reading has become a lost, if not forgotten art. The sign over the ruling elite's brothel, however, says "Jezebel's," and biblical appellations pepper the signs over most commercial and governmental establishments. The shop signs and window displays and TV footage keep banging the idea home. We sure as hell ain't in Kansas anymore.

Behind his imposing gallows, Walsh built a massive wall, drawing from the pronounced wall imagery in Atwood's novel (good walls make good metaphors, whether cinematically in Bernardo Bertolucci's THE LAST EMPEROR or literally in Ursula LeGuin's semi-dystopic novel, *The Dispossessed*). "The idea," said Walsh, "was that this society would have its own court architect, its own Albert Speer, who would try to work with the vernacular of this society. He would use walls to divide the society—sort of an American Berlin Wall—and to surround it and protect it from the outside. The elders of Gilead walled off their living community, and they walled off the US/Canadian border, once the longest unguarded border in the world, to keep the Canadians out and their own people in."

Once filming was underway, Walsh said he ran afoul of Schlöndorff's apparent love of clutter. Walsh's design of Robert Duvall's study, for instance, had initially entailed a lovely, wood-paneled library with only a desk and two chairs to distract the eye from Duvall's seduction of Richardson. "I tended," said Walsh, "to see the film as a minimalist nightmare, and I wanted to keep the environment as empty as possible of things that don't matter."

This, however, proved too stark for both Schlöndorff and his DP, who opted to fill the room with cardboard boxes filled with pilaged booty from the now-defunct consumer society. The problem with that, said Walsh, was that it didn't so much create a question as it did chaos. "In the end," he noted, "I came to believe that Volker is a visual anarchist. He likes to create anarchy in his working situation and in his films." □

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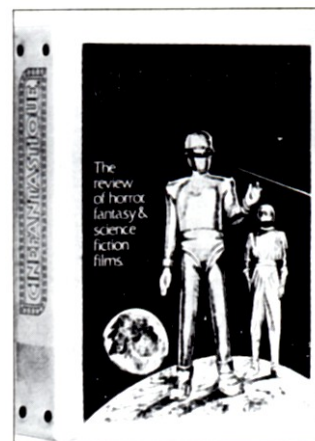
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ATWOOD ON THE HANDMAID'S TALE

continued from page 18
tions.

For years, streetwise literary critics knew better than to even hint that Atwood wrote autobiographical fiction. There was a time—before Atwood's international reputation afforded new meaning to the Canadian expatriate, "Take off!"—when the striking, waif-like 50 year-old novelist would have snapped their spines like so many twigs, resentful of the implication that there was something lacking in her powers of invention.

Times have changed though. Atwood's most recent novel, the best-selling *Cat's Eye*, is widely regarded as more than marginally autobiographical, and the high profile Toronto native—whose books have rendered her only slightly less pervasive a Canadian export commodity than hydroelectric power and Sam Bronfman's rye-based hooch—no longer bristles quite so vigorously at the glimmers of personal recognition her books appear to inspire.

Atwood-watchers eager to catch a glimpse of her in the film version of *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* however, will be disappointed to learn she was not asked to put in a cameo appearance. Although Atwood would have liked to appear in the film, she did not show up at the North Carolina set, where she visited for a day, in time to be carted off, with the other arrestees extras assembled in a Duke University courtyard, for re-education or liquidation.

Yet Atwood regards Natasha Richardson, who plays Kate in the movie, as a suitable stand-in. Richardson possesses, she said, much of the flintiness which fans and detractors alike regard as Atwood's trademark. "Richardson has an amazingly stubborn look for her face," she said.

Speculating about the future of the United States is not as odd an occupation for the fiercely nationalistic and deeply feminist writer as it might seem. Though Atwood was born in Ottawa to a family with strong cultural roots in Nova Scotia, she traces her stock back to 17th century New England Puritan society.

In 1962, as a graduate student in American literature at Harvard's Radcliffe College, Atwood explored her roots under the tutelage of Perry Miller, a literary historian who legitimized, within academe, the study of Puritan society. She dedicated *The Handmaid's Tale*, in fact, to his memory.

"I see the book, and, of course, the film, as about the past as well as the future," said Atwood. "[The

Puritans] have a certain strain of thinking which has been present in the States since the beginning."

Atwood also has little doubt that the film adaptation of her book will be the American film director Volker Schlöndorff yearned to make.

"It does get very tricky," she said. "American films seem to come in great varieties and sizes and shapes. I suppose the question is whether a film about America is an American film? It's set in America, and it has American actors—Natasha is, of course, bilingual," quipped Atwood. "I mean, was Joseph Conrad a British writer?"

"Judging from the book sales [according to Atwood's agent, Los Angeles-based Phoebe Larmore, well over a million in the U.S. alone, and booming in Canada, England, France, and Germany], it is a subject that has riveted the book-reading public. They certainly thought it was about them. It was about them."

Moreover, as a piece of political prophecy, *The Handmaid's Tale* has done a tad better than most such efforts, however hard the initial premise was for some to swallow.

"Part of the impetus of the book was my feeling of outrage at what, to me, were the confidence tricks being played on an unsuspecting public by people like the Bakkers—the use of religion for ulterior motives to enrich yourself and to gain power, which is not what my reading of the New Testament is at all. I know the Bible pretty well, maybe because in Canada it was never removed from the schools. I have that upbringing, and of course, anybody with an advanced degree in literature has to know the Bible."

Atwood said, in fact, that she has noted distinct—and telling—reactions to her scenarios in each of the English-speaking countries where she has been published.

"The British say, 'Jolly good story!' The Canadians ask, 'Can it happen here?' And the Americans say, 'How much time have we got?'"

Atwood herself declined to produce a screenplay for *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*, attesting that she was too close to the book and too busy with her other writing. Moreover, she favored the assignment of playwright Harold Pinter to write the script because he was especially adept at writing scenes in which dialogue is spare—in Atwood's society, speech itself has been curtailed, and much must be communicated between the lines.

Atwood had approved of the initial choice of Karel Reisz as

director, mainly, she said, because she knew he and Pinter worked well together. But her enthusiasm for Reisz soured when she learned the Czech director was demanding a far bigger budget for the film than producer Daniel Wilson could make available—and that this, according to Larmore, was holding up production.

Atwood met Volker Schlöndorff, Reisz's replacement, in London while on a book tour. "I loved him," she reported. "Volker is not a stuffed shirt; he directed *THE TIN DRUM*, which is a pretty wonderful film; and he is pretty faithful to authors' works, and was not trying to make *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* into a whole other thing."

Atwood noted that she had no problem whatever with the fact that Pinter took liberties with her narrative. "There are some back and forths in the movie [producer Wilson noted, in fact, that some of them may have been edited out for the sake of clarity], but you can't have too many time-levels for the viewer—it becomes very confused.

"Movies and books are different things, and they work in different ways. I'll be very interested to see the film—I've only seen five scenes, and the only thing they seem to have changed is the clothing. I had suggested dresses going down to the floor."

Atwood expressed slight alarm, however, at hearing that Robert Duvall has, in some opinions, taken over the film with his character. "I'd feel pretty strange about that," she said. "He is awfully plausible in that role, which is no comment on the plausibility of these kinds of regimes. They don't get in because people don't believe in them but, rather, because they do believe in them."

The film ends on a different note than in the book, but the essential point of their closing scenes—that the nightmare will end, with society shaking off its oppressors—remains the same.

"I'm one of those sappy people who believe that regimes like this don't last forever. Now that we are watching totalitarianism crumble in the Eastern bloc, I don't think that optimism is displaced."

Nor does she think that her optimism in *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*'s boxoffice potential is displaced. "I think it will speak to a large audience of women out there. And I also picked up a large audience of men with this book—men like science fiction."

As for what the future holds in store for Atwood, that, unfortunately, is not a matter of conjecture. "I never speculate about my own future," she said. "Only about the future of society." □



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THE GUARDIAN

continued from page 7

suspense in a work of entertainment requires a payoff. It's why you go to see these things. There's got to be a catharsis. The cathartic moment is what the audience is there for. It's as emotionally satisfying as a good laugh—a good scare."

Unfortunately, these cathartic moments do not always make their way to the audience intact, thanks to an increasingly restrictive MPAA ratings board. Interestingly enough, THE EXORCIST survived intact in 1973, but according to Friedkin, "It was a different board then, not run by the asshole who runs it today, who gets people to cut frames out of their movies—this fucking idiot Richard Heffner. THE EXORCIST would have been censored up the ass if he had been head of the ratings board then. Fortunately, he wasn't; unfortunately, he is now. So almost anything that departs from the norm in any way—and wants to avoid an X-rating—you got to fuck around and cut frames out for him and his seven dwarves—mental dwarves, not physical."

Despite anticipating trouble with the board on THE GUARDIAN, Friedkin is making no attempt to pre-censor himself, because he knows (as Wes Craven found out with SHOCKER) that the board is too unpredictable. "They'll probably want stuff out," he said. "I'd be surprised if they didn't. They use veiled language, like the Communist Party would use when they tell people in Russia what is expected of them. The censor doesn't come right out and say, 'Cut this.' It's constant games with those people. However, I guess it's better than a government censorship panel. It's so-called industry

self-censorship, but, for the most part, it's really foolish and stupid. It is censorship, no matter what they call it."

Whether or not Friedkin ends up having trouble with the ratings board, the director should have his film locked down in time for Universal to release it in March or April. Friedkin referred to an early plan to release the film in February, on President's Day, as being "in honor of the President." Laughed the director, "Right up his ass! We said, 'Here, President, take this!' It's our gift."

Coincidentally, THE EXORCIST III: THE TRUE SEQUEL should be in release when THE GUARDIAN opens. Friedkin said he never had any interest in the project, although Blatty offered it to him for several years, under the title LEGION. "I loved THE EXORCIST, but I found LEGION pretty boring," said Friedkin, who prefers not to make sequels, although as he claims, "LEGION isn't truly a sequel to THE EXORCIST. The only character [Blatty] uses again is Kinderman—that's not enough to call it a sequel. The story should stand on its own, and I think it does—I just wasn't that interested in it. What they're doing in calling it THE EXORCIST [III] is a sham."

For Friedkin, the greatest sin an artist can make is to be boring. "I would rather see PSYCHO 59 times than see A PASSAGE TO INDIA once—because I don't want to shell out \$6.00 to be fucking bored in a movie theatre," he said. "Even if I don't enjoy a picture, I want to have something happening up there that's gonna hold me, instead of some intellectual bullshit or a story about some spinster who's got the hots for a stable boy but never fucks him." □

MILLENNIUM

continued from page 42

in the book and short story is to raid only planes where everybody dies for just this reason.

Limitations on the film's budget cut the ruling council of Baltimore's world from nine people to six and make the future look cheap and grungy in a manner not suggested by Varley. In the film the complexities have been flensed from Varley's narrative, perhaps in a vain effort to keep the audience from becoming bogged down or confused.

One of the refreshing aspects of Varley's book was the way it poked holes in a few cherished Hollywood clichés. How unfortunate it is, then, to see those very clichés present in the film version. The worst is the movie's sappy simple-minded happy ending in which Baltimore's world is destroyed by a time paradox only to be followed by a shot of a rising sun, with an offscreen narrator quietly intoning: "This is not the end; it is not even the beginning of the end; but it is the end of the beginning."

Not clear is the plot point from Varley's book that the rescued crash victims have escaped through the time gate to set up a primitive society some millennia hence (though both the book and the movie beg the question how an utterly polluted and devastated Earth is expected to make an ecological recovery).

Much better is the first half of Varley's double twist ending for the book. It's the only section narrated by Sherman, Baltimore's personal robot love/psychiatrist, one of the book's more interesting characters, turned into a simple mechanical man in the film. Against Hollywood convention,

Varley does not give it a happy ever after ending. Instead, Baltimore has the child she's always wanted but dies a couple of months afterward, never admitting the true extent of her feelings for Smith. And Smith does not prove to be a perfect father. Mayer meets his daughter who does not love him in return and tells him a devastating piece of information.

The book, unlike the movie, is packed with ideas and is made psychologically interesting and somewhat believable. Through careful research, Varley chronicles how a plane crash investigation takes place, from details of the procedure, to the reactions of the people involved. This is some of the book's most interesting material, but the film merely skims over it.

Varley specifically confronts the very real problem that air traffic controllers are, due to mismanagement, forced to deal with—outdated and outmoded equipment that, when pushed beyond its limits, has a tendency to malfunction, endangering hundreds of lives as controllers valiantly try to keep track of the massive amount of air traffic. The film, in contrast, pins the blame for its opening crash on an overworked and overly nervous air traffic controller, making an oblique reference to computer failure with no attempt to inform the audience of the realities of the situation. In fact, perhaps to reassure audiences watching in-flight movies, the film even contradicts the book by having the National Transportation Safety Board assure the audience that Congress is more than willing to allocate funds needed for new equipment, totally ignoring political realities. □

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TRANSIT

continued from page 15

slotted drum," said Chesney. "You can roll the drum over and drop 5,000 gallons of water, and you can vary it. Control was one of the big factors." Control meant the filmmakers could use actors in the scenes without fearing for their safety. "The actors had some question marks in their eyes," said Chesney about the effect. "Once they got going they were just having fun. But, this can go from very fun to very scary."

Phillips said he wasn't totally enamored with the idea of doing the stunt. "I like doing my own stunts," he said, "but after RENE-GAGES I swore up and down that I was not going to do another movie with stunts in it. I broke a rib on that one and managed to get banged up pretty good. Yet, even though I was so opposed to doing another movie with stunts right off the bat, I adored the script, and I love this genre. The screenplay reminded me of a lot of things but I knew that it could be very, very different; that it could stand on its own." □

HENRY

continued from page 31

guy is that he kills for no reason, at random. In the film, Henry advises Otis never to murder anyone he knows, never to make it personal. Enraged, Otis says, "Well, I'd like to kill *someone*." "Say that again," says Henry to his student.

The purposeless murderers find apt expression in the calculated distance of director McNaughton's point of view, or rather lack of same. Like Henry, McNaughton takes a clinical approach to his chosen work: no directorial flourishes, no ironic winks, no moral vantage. The technique reaches its ultimate expression when Henry and Otis kill an obese thief and obtain a video camcorder in the bargain. Immediately afterwards, the pair case an upscale suburban home. What follows is a chilling home invasion sequence, one with none of the distancing stylization of the violence of the equivalent (and probably source) scene in *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*. A videotape-to-celluloid transfer shows Otis mugging for the camera as he violates the woman of the house. Henry is the auteur, behind the camcorder, recording the scene as he kicks the husband off-camera. Suddenly, the couple's son runs into the video frame and Henry drops the camera. We follow the attack from this off-center perspective, lying stationary, until McNaughton's (celluloid) camera pulls back to reveal Henry and Otis at home watching the replay like good couch potatoes.

In other hands, the camcorder sequences would be a self-referential comment on spectatorship or the viewers' complicity in the crime of the horror film. But the point here is more troubling—that the motives and mind of a killer like Henry will ever remain unknown, a blank wall. Throughout, the emotional buffer of conscious artistry is withheld: even obvious metaphors—Henry's part-time job is as a household exterminator—comes unfiltered by irony.

As Henry, Michael Rooker makes Norman Bates look like Alex Keaton. There is no glow of humanity, behind his impenetrable, ever so slightly crossed, black eyes. He speaks in a clipped rasp, tight-lipped, passionless. He has no ticks, baroque posturing, snappy banter, hockey mask, chainsaw, scythe, or razor blades, just the blunt capacity for the deed, the tense and taut malice of a poised serpent. In a perverse way, Rooker's ability to unnerve is uplifting: repeated exposure to *FACES OF DEATH* has not unhinged the moral equilibrium after all.

Henry seems attracted to Becky, but because he reveals nothing—and the director provides no hints—the viewer bequeaths human feeling to the subject rather than getting it from him. That there is no chance of redemption is certain, but the ultimate outcome is far from it. We know only that it is surely a matter of time before Henry ties up the loose ends, packs up his suitcases and heads out on the road again. □

THE BORROWER

continued from page 28

McNaughton's fault!' But Atlantic kind of thought it was okay, which it wasn't."

After not being paid by Kushner-Locke for five weeks, McNaughton thought the whole deal was off. He returned to Chicago ("I was happy to be in a dirty, cold, old town and away from those palm trees," he said.) He was shocked when he got the news that Atlantic was still interested in completing *THE BORROWER*.

"Somehow, Atlantic got the picture away from Kushner-Locke," McNaughton said. "We had to rewrite it and cut back on the effects. I asked Richard Fire, the man who co-wrote *HENRY*, to help me. But the attitude was, 'Who the hell is Fire? We've got our own guy.' It was the same old Hollywood thing. We worked on the new script for a month. Tennant hated it. He said, 'You win, you can use your writer.' Back in Chicago, Richard and I started working together. We made the film more character-centered. We

pushed the cops chasing the alien into the background. The interesting thing is the monster taking over people. By the time we were done, we had completed seven drafts. The seventh was the one that got approved."

From day one, McNaughton wanted to make *THE BORROWER* on his home turf in Chicago where he had enjoyed great success with *HENRY*. But even after scouting Chicago-area locations and assembling his people from *HENRY*, McNaughton realized the production was destined to be shot in Los Angeles because Atlantic viewed Chicago talent as inferior and less experienced than West Coast talent. They were also frightened by the infamous Chicago unions.

Tennant hired Elliott Rosenblatt as line producer. Rosenblatt poo-pooed Chicago and its locations and eventually got the production shifted back to Los Angeles, McNaughton said. From that point, Rosenblatt took an aggressive role on the set, eventually forcing the replacement of 12 key personnel, including the camera and sound crews.

"It was a disaster for me," McNaughton said. "Rosenblatt sandbagged my DP and got somebody loyal to him. A guy named Bob New. I had seen his [resume] reel and originally chose not to hire him. We called the guy 'Bob-No-Can-Do,' because his pet comment was 'we couldn't do that.' He was into the fast, easy way to do things, not necessarily the right way."

Then the big ship sank. Atlantic suddenly went belly-up. Tennant disappeared. Rosenblatt reportedly became at odds with the film's owners. As McNaughton put it, "There were a lot of bad feelings." Those feelings were so bad that when *THE BORROWER* was scheduled for postproduction work at Zenith Labs in Chicago, Rosenblatt tried to seize the work print at Atlantic and take it with him, McNaughton said. "One of the guys working with the company, R.P. Sekon, grabbed the film before he [Rosenblatt] could get it," McNaughton said. "Otherwise, who knows what would have happened to it."

McNaughton is still waiting to see what happens to *THE BORROWER*. It's a project he decided to direct after he had rejected offers to helm New World's *WARLOCK* (before that studio went under as well) and *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 3*. "I turned that down because I knew that if I made too many more blood pictures, that's it. That will be my life," McNaughton said.

McNaughton called *THE BOR-*

ROWER a "wild" film, and he's still proud of what he accomplished in the face of adversity. "If you're going to make a horror film, make it outrageous," he said. "I'm 40 years-old. In many ways, I still feel 17. I'm still in touch with the 17 year-old part of myself. I know who mostly goes to see horror films. That's young people. They like original plot twists and scary films, not the same old stuff. Today's kids are channel-switchers. You've got to keep them interested." □

DIRECTING THE HANDMAID'S TALE

continued from page 21

entirely in Beirut—Schlondorff had started off as a globe-trotting cinejournalist) and SWANN IN LOVE, based on the novel by Marcel Proust and starring Jeremy (DEAD RINGERS) Irons.

Wilson did not, however, at first warm to the idea of having Schlondorff aboard THE HANDMAID'S TALE. Wilson had been forced by a dealbreaker clause to use another German director, Bernard Sinkel, for his HEMINGWAY miniseries, and the two had argued bitterly and incessantly throughout the two-year production. Wilson told Sam Cohn, Schlondorff's agent, he didn't think he was prepared to chance a repeat of that experience. Cohn, however, stood his ground. Schlondorff, he said, was a man of great substance.

Schlondorff said he was helped greatly in directing THE HANDMAID'S TALE by having both the Pinter script and the Atwood novel to draw on. "Pinter's script," Schlondorff noted, "was extremely minimal, but it was also very solid. He left spaces between the lines for the director to fill, just as, I suppose, Atwood left spaces for the reader's mind. The book didn't have his dramatic structure, but it was rich in detail. If I hadn't had both to draw upon, I wouldn't have been able to imagine the film.

"I wanted the film to be extremely blunt and straightforward," said Schlondorff. "It's very much like THE TIN DRUM—bright colors, extremely sensuous, often brutal. That was how I read the book. It was that quality that made me come to it—Margaret Atwood's world struck me as uniquely surreal, like a naked woman with a veil on her face."

Schlondorff took his inspiration in directing the film from the work of Stanley Kubrick. The influence of Kubrick is evident, for instance, in an early editing decision which envisioned THE HANDMAID'S TALE as a series of master shots. "Kubrick is, of course, the best at this kind of filmmak-

ing," said Schlondorff. "And he's extremely in touch with the real world. I would agree he was a strong inspiration."

And Schlondorff's German background did help him get inside the mental landscape of Kate, Atwood's long-suffering handmaid. The role, played by Natasha Richardson, was, at a first glance, a passive one. Schlondorff insisted that it was only Americans—who had never lived under an authoritarian regime and could not possibly fathom that in the world inhabited by Kate, open dissent would have meant instant death—who voiced this complaint.

"I myself never found Kate a passive character," noted Schlondorff, "although she certainly read that way on paper. Kate is a survivor, not an underground fighter. And she responds to repression in much the same way that many women today do—she seems to take it in her stride, and waits quietly for her day of revenge."

But production designer Tom Walsh isn't certain that Schlondorff's involvement and faith in the story was sufficient to make THE HANDMAID'S TALE the success it ought to be. "I think the lesson to be learned in all this is don't do what you don't believe in," said Walsh. On the other hand, Walsh admitted that he may well be wrong, and that he will be delighted if that turns out to be the case. □

COSTUMING THE HANDMAID'S TALE

continued from page 25

may have been for [Walsh]. Because Volker knew her as well as he did, he tended to trust her more than people he didn't know as well. So [Walsh] may not have had that edge with the director which can prove so important."

Novelist Margaret Atwood suggested having the costumes sweep at floor length, an idea that was abandoned. Noted the writer, "They said when they did that the costumes looked pretty stupid—that the clothing would look more real at calf-length."

The author's color scheme, however, is intact, for which she was grateful. Said the novelist, "It was pretty essential—I based it on Christian iconography. Red is the color of Mary Magdalene, blue for the virgin, white for purity. Green and striped I made up."

Costume designer Atwood said she took the creative input coming her way from various quarters in stride. "There was a lot of indecision, which is far worse than an argument. But I've worked on shows with six producers—that was certainly no different in that respect." □

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LETTERS

FRIGHT NIGHT 2 NOT "UNINSPIRED"

I am greatly distressed that certain comments which do not reflect my opinion were added to the text of my article on the effects for FRIGHT NIGHT, PART 2 [20:3:50].

I certainly acknowledge your editorial prerogative, and respect your decision to shape my writing. However, I do not feel it is fair or appropriate to attribute to me the statement that the sequel is "uninspired."

I would appreciate your correcting this misrepresentation.

Steven Jongeward
Los Angeles, CA 90038

[My apologies for this editorial indiscretion. Two reviewers, myself included, awarded the film two stars ("good") in last issue's film ratings chart. FSC]

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It's been a rough couple of months. First STAR TREK V

made me sad. Then MILLENNIUM was a disappointment. And now COMMUNION comes along to make me furious.

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Incidentally, if anyone believes that COMMUNION really happened, I have a house in Amityville I'd like to talk to you about.

Kevin Patrick
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

RED DEATH MAKEUP CREDITS

Several times I have had the pleasure of seeing my name printed in *Cinefantastique*. It is always nice to get recognition for work done. It is especially nice because I have been a subscriber from before I started working in the movie business.

In the article "The House of Poe" [20:1/2:20] I am given credit

for a makeup in Roger Corman's new MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH. I did not work on this film. The makeup was done by Dean Jones (no relation to the Disney actor). I can understand the mix-up based on several reasons:

Dean and I have the same first name.

We both live in Los Angeles, but have roots in the North Carolina area.

We have worked together on several films, including two for Roger Corman, THE TERROR WITHIN and TRANSYLVANIA TWIST.

Dean Gates
(no relation to Dean Jones)
S. Pasadena, CA 91030

I have a correction to make regarding your "House of Poe" article.

The Death makeup pictured from Roger Corman's remake of MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH was not the work of Dean Gates. I sculpted and painted the Death mask, which was applied to actor Patrick Macnee by makeup artist

Mark Buckmaster.

The remainder of the film's plague and blood-and-guts effects were created by Mark Buckmaster and Dean Jones.

Ken S. Lamplugh
N. Hollywood, CA 91602

[The makeup is pictured this issue, on page 55, credited to supervisor Dean Jones.]

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As you know, the Library of Congress has announced the first 25 films to be placed in the National Film Registry. The list is carefully balanced for genres and types, but includes only three fantastic films—two fantasies and one science fiction film, but no horror films. The genre films are SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, STAR WARS, and THE WIZARD OF OZ. I hope *Cinefantastique* will point out in print the need to quickly add to the Register four black-and-white American horror films of the great-

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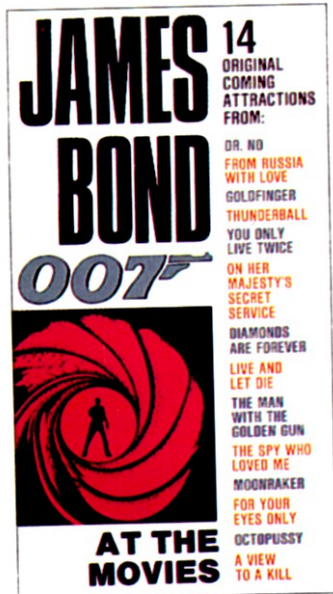
STAR TREK DOUBLE STANDARD

Reading Peter S. Perakos' review of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION [20:1/2:102], I was reminded of *Twilight Zone* magazine's review of STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN, in which they pronounced that "everyone knows it is somewhat of a disappointment." Apparently, the reviewer was somewhat out of touch with the audience, who considered the film quite good. Similarly, I also recalled Cleveland Amory's 1967 review of the old STAR TREK episode "Shore Leave" in *TV Guide*. At one point Mr. Amory quotes Kirk's line: "Face front. Don't talk. Don't think. Don't breathe." To this set-up Amory added, "It was good advice—and in our opinion, the best way for an adult to watch this show." Despite this contrived cheap-shot, "Shore Leave" is still considered a classic episode.

Compare Perakos' Don Rickles routine to the same issue's review of STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER. Reviewer Thomas Doherty, who displayed a certain fervor in thumbing down STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION in issue 19:3, seems apologetic for not liking the latest film. Even though one could write volumes on the faults of this movie, Doherty opts to dwell on the one thing that no one could change: the ages of the cast! (Paramount should be grateful they have greater control over changing directors, writers, special effects, etc.) Let's face it, this film would've stank even if the cast were still in their '60s prime. In a more astounding move, Doherty totally threw critical standards to the wind by praising Shatner's "visual style" and the movie's effects! Ultimately, what bothers me the most is the suspicion that your reviewers would not have minced words had STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION perpetrated such a disaster. There is an obvious bias here that undermines the magazine's reviews. THE NEXT GENERATION is apparently judged under different standards; an imposed no-win scenario. But as long as this blatant lack of objectivity continues, then your reviews will be just as meaningless as those from the *Twilight Zone*.

Tommy McClain
Katy, TX 77450

THE VIDEO COLLECTORS' CORNER

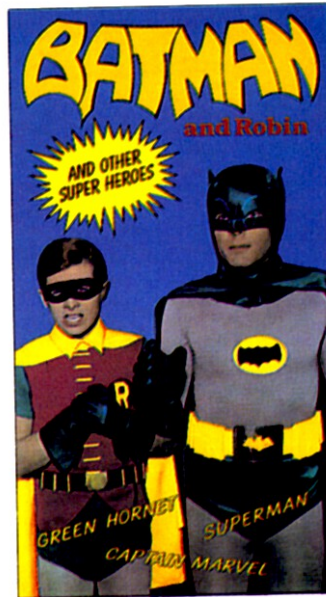


JAMES BOND 007
AT THE MOVIES

14 ORIGINAL COMING ATTRACTIONS FROM:
DR. NO
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
GOLDFINGER
THUNDERBALL
YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE
ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE
DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER
LIVE AND LET DIE
THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN
THE SPY WHO LOVED ME
MOONRAKER
FOR YOUR EYES ONLY
OCTOPUSSY
A VIEW TO A KILL

BOND TRAILERS

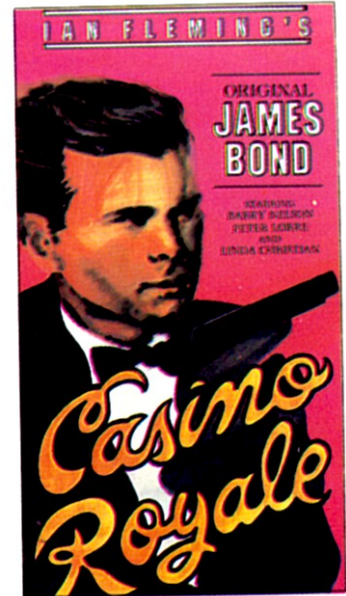
This compilation of trailers, featuring Sean Connery and Roger Moore, covers the Bond films made between 1962 and 1985. In color, the tape features famous villains and Bond girls. 45 mins. **\$11.95.**



BATMAN and Robin
AND OTHER SUPER HEROES
GREEN HORNET
CAPTAIN MARVEL
SUPERMAN

BATMAN

This video is a fantastic collection of star power featuring: Batman and Robin, Superman, The Green Hornet (with Bruce Lee as Kato), Captain Marvel, and the many other beloved heroes. 50 mins. **\$11.95**



IAN FLEMING'S
ORIGINAL JAMES BOND
FEATURING BARRY NELSON, PETER LORRE, AND LINDA CHRISTIAN
Casino Royale

CASINO ROYALE

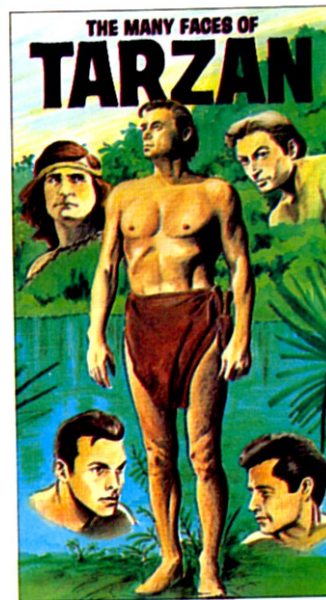
This classic TV production of CASINO ROYALE stars Barry Nelson—the first James Bond—co-stars actor Peter Lorre, and Linda Christian, who became the first of the glamorous Bond girls. **\$11.95.**



The Many Faces of JAMES BOND 007

THE FACES OF BOND

This tape covers all six Bond actors (Connery, Moore, Dalton, Lazenby, Niven, and Nelson) in a 007 tribute. Relive Bond's greatest moments with rare footage and clips. Includes a THUNDERBALL featurette. **\$11.95.**



THE MANY FACES OF TARZAN

FACES OF TARZAN

An in-depth look at the 70 years of Tarzan movie magic and the 15 actors who brought the character to life—from the silents to the present—featuring rare footage, film clips, etc. 75 mins. **\$11.95**



T.V. BLOOPERS
RESCUED FROM THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR!
STAR TREK
LAVERNIE & SHIRLEY
MASH
HAPPY DAYS
PETRON FLAKE
THE WALTONS
CAROL BURNETT
TWILIGHT ZONE
...AND MANY, MANY, MORE!
FROM OVER 30 OF TV'S FAVORITES!
SEE SCENES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ON TV BEFORE!
SEE YOUR FAVORITE STARS AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE!

TV BLOOPERS

A compilation of some of the funniest outtakes ever assembled. Most of the scenes in this video have never been seen before. Good clean family fun featuring genre favorites like STAR TREK and TZ. 60 mins. **\$11.95**

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Clockwise from center: Daffy Duck, Yosemite Sam, Road Runner & Coyote, Tweety & Sylvester, Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny.

CFQ BOOKSHOP

Stand out from the crowd in a handsome T-shirt featuring some genre movie gems! The colorful designs shown below are "puff" printed (for a contemporary 3-D look) on high quality, heavy weigh, 50% poly/50% cotton fabric. Available in adult sizes: SM, MED, LG, XL. **\$15.00** (plus \$1.00 shipping).

MTI
MOVIE TEES, INC.



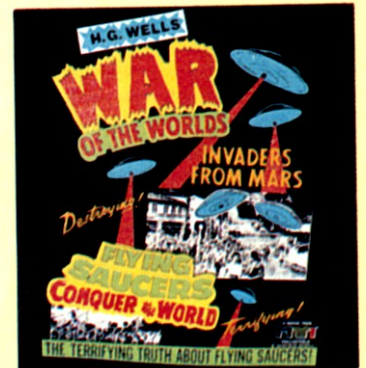
EVIL DEAD 2



WOLF MAN



INVISIBLE MAN



WAR OF THE WORLDS



INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN



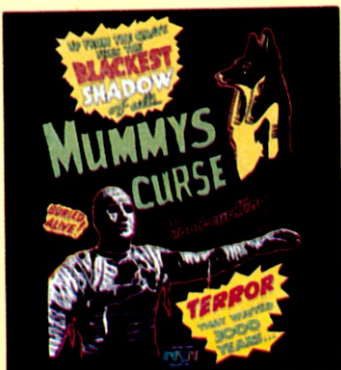
RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD II



FRANKENSTEIN



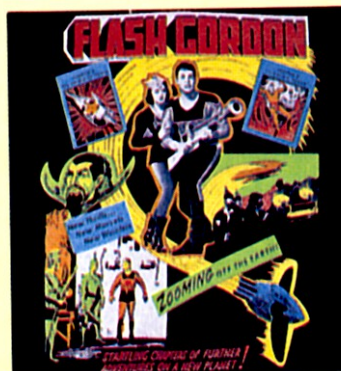
SURF NAZIS MUST DIE



MUMMY'S CURSE



GREEN HORNET



FLASH GORDON



TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

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